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MY FIRST BOOK.

AS when you hear a child lisping halfwords,
Which its mother only understandeth;
Or when you see a harper draw his fingers
All across his harpstrings, for to try them;
(Making only bits of broken music:
For the fine rapt melodies, as yet
Are sleeping in the harpstrings, to be wakened
By and by, by the man's practised fingers—
When they have become more cunning, wiser)
So these strains be—preludes of a song
Lofty, enrapturing; for I feel within me
Yearnings, hopes, desires, and finest feelings;
Melodies welling up, down in my heart,
Ready to burst out into sweet music:
And I hope to put into the harpstrings
All the music that doth dwell within me
When I am practised in the art of songcraft.

MY FIRST BOOK.

NAMED OTHERWISE:

LISPINGS, YEARNINGS, AND MUTTERINGS.

IN THREE PARTS.

BY LEVI BELCHER.

BIBLIOTHECA
MAY 1881
BODLEIANA

A WISH—I mind its power!—
A wish that till my latest hour
Shall strongly heave my breast;—
That I for poor auld Scotland's sake,
Some useful plan or book could make,
Or sing a sang at least.

BURNS.

OXFORD:
ALDEN'S PRINTING WORKS, CORN-MARKET STREET.
1873.

280. o. 625.

AND this small book with the red lids was his:
The words and lines being the poor outward signs
Of wonderful melodies, which had foamed
Down in his heart, and flowed thence into words.

* * * * *

So this poor poet did not live in vain;
But, as we see, his small redlidded book
Made manifold melodies in one simple heart.

"REUBEN BROOKS," pp. 35, 37.

I AM a poet young: I have not yet
Learnt how to use my pinions, nor can fly
Into the skyey realms of poetry.

* * * * *

As yet I only flutter, as I said—
An unfledged child of Nature in its nest,
Flapping its wings to wanton in the air,
And wander o'er the fields and woods of earth,
And through the boundless starry realms of heaven.

INTRODUCTION.

NOW it happeneth to wellnigh every man, before he getteth into the Highway of Life, that he must wander through the flowery fields of Hope, and the pathless woods of Waywardness; along the crooked lanes of Foolishness; over the hills of Desire, and beside the rippling brooks of Love; see the rosy fringe of Life's dawn die away, and the sweet trembling stars of his heart's first Loves fade silently in the blue—coming at last to the Great Highway, along which, dusty, footsore, and athirst, he must go till he cometh to the silent kingdom of Eternity. Thitherto (to this Highway) have I come, and sat me down on a mossy wayside stone to rest awhile, look behind and before, mark well the signposts, and rid me of all encumbrances for the journey that lieth before me. I have just been conning my notebook, full of the jottings of the wild and wayward effusions of my youth—rude sketches of Human Life and Nature, and inner loves and yearnings and sorrows, symboled in halfwords; and it struck me to put these into a book, and thus get rid of them, and all mere dreamings and vain hopes; so that casting off every hindrance I might gird myself for the great Journey of Life. Some fellowpilgrims to whom I told my will were

wishful to see it; others threw bucketfuls of cold water on my burning purpose: in this, as in other things, I found it best to choose and do for myself. So I have somewhat sorted these jottings, and made this little book of them, for my own behoof, and the pleasure of such as wished for it: that is chiefly what I aim at just now. That this first book should be uttered in verse would be natural: poetry is the religion of youth. I suppose we all have these epochs and wayside stones,—great events in a little way: as to the foolishness or wisdom of recording this one, the reader may decide according to his whim or judgment: I have no humblemouthed petitions or cunning apologies whatever to make.

Knowing these things, you will not expect the music found herein to be that of a master: that some should be very much like to a boy's tinwhistle music is sure. And my opportunities have not been altogether of the best; for if, after nailing and gluing pieces of wood together, I should take to joining the subtil music of the soul's hopes and yearnings and sorrows and desires and imaginings, there will surely be some excuse for awkwardness and clumsiness sometimes seen therein. Yet, if you do hear some snatches of true symphony, or even a few deep rich notes, I shall be glad,—that is the chief thing. If there be music lurking in the harpstrings, when the fingers of the man get wise enough, they will fetch it out: you might beat a tinkettle forever and make none. That there is some music in me, for myself I doubt not: even last night, the divinest, sweetest melodies flowed through my heart, filling me with rapt ecstasy, and would not let me slumber. If they had

flowed into this book as the water from the spring floweth into the bucket of the village maiden, you would have had a bookful: but ere I could imprison them in words they had flowed quite away. However, the book is what it pretends to be; and they who wished to see it will now have the opportunity. Lisping must go before eloquence, yearning before attainment, desire before doing.

So, sitting down on this aforementioned mossy wayside stone, I arrange this handful of flowers, which I have gathered in the meadows and woods, and along the wayssides and brooksides of youth,—these flowers of youth, its desires and sorrows and hopes and dreams. Daisies, buttercups, cowslips, poppies, dandelions, moondaisies—all kinds and colours, good and bad plucked together childlike fashion, as was to be expected. I give them to you as they are, saying Goodbye, till we meet again! I hear the noise and trafficking on the Highway,—voices are calling me in the distance—the evening shadows will soon be falling—I, too, must be going at once,—Goodbye!

LEVI BELCHER.

Oxford, May 7th, 1872.

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FOR THE BEGINNER OF THIS LITTLE BOOK.

WHEN two young lovers, with their hearts aflame,
Do meet each other in the summertime
To go anutting or blackberrying,
Returning home at twilight, baskets full—
Their hearts full too, full of the love of youth,
Full of the music of each other's words,
Full of the melodies of desire and hope:
She, leaning on his arm, with downcast eyes,
He, looking down on her speaking sweet words—
How deep and true is their communion!
O reader! so let ours be—heart with heart.

Now, though I did not see it, I am sure
Before this damsel went to meet the lad,
If any patch or stain was on her dress
She hid it in the gathers out of sight:
And many a time looked in the lookingglass,
Washing her pretty face until it shone,
As maids are wont—wetting two fingers oft
To smooth down some stray hairs, and then at last
Tripping along the lane so merrily,
The manycoloured ribbons streaming to the wind.

And yet, my gentle maid, all this was needless!
(O pardon me, for I wish to be benign)
Thy sweetheart's heart was true, and love is blind.

Some lasses hollowhearted, giddybrained,
Might poke fun at thee as thou pass'dst them by:
But, wrapt in the broad mantle of his love,
To him thou wast as lovely as an angel.

But I had best confess to thee at once,—
I am not careful as this maiden was
About my tinseled drapery and so on.
A good true heart is better than these things;
And though I've been upbraided and rebuked
By words coming from a maiden's crimson lips
(The music was persuasive, also sweet),
Yet somehow I am rough and rugged still;
Perhaps it is my nature so to be.
But, be this as it may, one thing I know:
If I should find a true heart, true as steel,
Under a smockfrock of brownholland made,
I'd love it as though under kingly robes.
For when I was a boy, and roamed the woods,
And plucked the brown nuts from the hazel boughs;
I always ate the kernel, threw away the shell.
Or when at fairs I got a cocoanut,
Come from the faroff land of Hindostan,
I cracked full soon the hard and fibrous husk
Against some giant pebble or stone wall,
And drank the milk and ate the juicy fruit.
And I remember in these same wild days,
(It makes a little smile creep o'er my face)
How in the valley yonder through the fields
Running, I crushed the pretty flowers to earth—

Cap in my hand—after a humblebee:
He making buzzing music as he went,
I filling the field with jubilant cries,
And following close behind to strike him down,
And kill him and his music in the grass.
Or lingering slyly where the foxglove stalks
Towered up, clustered with blossoms pink and white—
Those deepmouthed blossoms where the humblebees
Diving for honey, almost hid themselves,
And I with thumb and finger closed the lips,
And snapt the blossom off: my prisoner
Buzzing quite loudly in his prisonhouse—
(A beautiful blossom, yet a prisonhouse—
Even a bee doth love his liberty);
Yet I soon killed him, mindful of his sting,
And opened him, and found his honeybag,
Rolled the sweet morsel underneath my tongue,
And ate it, smacking loudly with my lips.
Therefore I love to probe the heart of things:
'Tis there the honey is, and fruit and milk.
Moreover in these days of tinseled shams,
And pretty rhymesters with their jingling words,
Who, when thou comest seeking juicy fruit
To satisfy the hunger in thy heart,
Bring thee a bunch of blossoms, red and blue,
A pretty husk—no kernel or sweet milk.

And now I come to see thee homely clad—
O do not sit and eye me up and down
With twinkling critical eyes to measure me,

And note the soils and patches on my clothes;
(I am a bachelor unwedded to Art:
Perhaps when I come again she'll be my wife,
And have brushed my garments and mended the rents):
But rather fix thine eyes upon my eyes,
And let our souls look through them, each on each,
And talk together of divinest things—
Forgetting the poor laws of etiquette.

But to go on with my allegory:—
Suppose this love and lover should be parted,
And hills should rise, and brooks should flow and foam,
And yellow cornfields wave between their hearts,
As they may do between thy heart and mine—
How often would a letter come to each,
Be opened, and conned over more than once—
The old handwriting, perhaps illwritten,
Misspelt, with many a blotch—what matter?
A fool looking thereon might laugh thereat,
Only a fool, though—he with a true heart
Would find the hidden kernel. As the man,
Dwelling in a forest of the hot lands,
Careless how gnarled and knotted the trunk is,
Thrusts his arm through the fissure elbowdeep,
And brings forth from the bosom of the tree
A handful of honey, all dropping to the ground:
Likewise the girl from this rough loveletter
Would find and eat the honey hidden there
(And every word, like flowers in summer fields,
Would have some honey hidden in its heart),

And the rows of crosses underneath it,
Though of kisses the poor signs and symbols,
Were true to her as though her lover's lips
Were making music on her crimson cheeks.

Now if in a rough gnarled knotted tree
Thou find'st, brimful of honey, a honeycomb—
Will not the honey be soft and rich and sweet?
Ah! sweeter for the clambering after it!
Old Nature hides her treasures out of sight—
Her pearls in the deep sea, and in deep mines
Her gold and silver, and all precious stones,
That thou shouldst prize and value them the more—
Of baubles thou canst fill a sack any day.
So do not be deceived by outward show—
The tinsel and drapery of pretty words;
And if the garb be shabby do not turn aside,
Maybe a heart beats there—a kingly heart—
Kinglier than under any robes of state—
Forgetful of the outward looks of him,
Herald him through the world—he is a king!

So now I send a loveletter to thee
(The book which now thou holdest in thy hand)
To con and ponder over in thy stillest hours;
Though with another kind of love—with love—
Are we not sons and daughters of one SIRE?
Brothers and sisters therefore, with one home
Under a great blue roof bedecked with stars,
And yearning for a faroff truer Home

Where all the feuds of Time are done away.
The music of what kind and quantity—
Trochaic, anapæstic or iambic—
I do not know at all, nor care to know:
I've written it to the rhythm of my heart—
Its pity and loves with cooings like a dove;
Its yearnings with cries heavenward, eaglewinged;
Its sorrows wailing like the waves at night,—
Set them to the inner music of my heart,
Soft and melodious, sad, or loud and wild:
As best I could do, being but a lisper.

I've written it with my heart: read it with thine—
Not with thine eyes—then thou wilt understand.
And if thou hear'st the music of a kiss,
A bee abuzzing 'mid the blossoms sweet,
A rill arippling down a mountain side,
Bells chiming on a twilight Sabbath eve,
The surging of the billows on the sea;
Or if some love or fancy which hath made
Sweet music in thine heart a hundred times,
But never found an utterance, have a voice
In this first book of mine, and thou shouldst love
The words that symbol it, why then I'll say—
I am a poet! and be glad at heart.

PART ONE:
CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH.

A CHILD's heart is always full of dreams,
And hopes and fears of what will never be:
It dwelleth in a heaven of its own,
And therefore loves the loveliest things of earth.

CHILDHOOD and youth are vanity.—*Solomon.*

AH what would the world be to us,
If the children were no more?
We should dread the desert behind us
Worse than the dark before.

Come to me, O ye children,
And whisper in my ear
What the birds and winds are singing
In your sunny atmosphere.

For what are all our contrivings,
And the wisdom of our books,
When compared with your caresses
And the gladness of your looks?

Ye are better than all the ballads
That ever were sung or said;
For ye are living poems,
And all the rest are dead.—*Longfellow.*

BEHOLD the child among his new-born blisses,
A six years' darling of a pigmy size!
See, where 'mid work of his own hand he lies,
Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,
With light upon him from his father's eyes!
See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,
Some fragment from his dream of human life,
Shaped by himself with newly learned art;
A wedding or a festival,
A morning on a funeral;
And this hath now his heart.—*Wordsworth.*

REUBEN BROOKS:

A GRANDFATHER'S TALE.

I TOLD this tale unto my grandsons three,
Their six blue eyes fixed on me; and also
Their sister's two dark eyes—dark as two sloes.
I told it to them on six following nights;
Sitting around the hearth, while the wild wind
Whistled and howled about the cottage bleak.

Like my young partner in the days of yore,
Sitting by the fireside on winter nights,
Amaking homespun things for household use:
Just so I spun this tale as I went on—
Spun it with the spinningwheel of my brain,
So silently—no humming sound was heard.
And sometimes one of them would interrupt,
Saying to me, O grandfather! is that true?
Whereat I answered them as followeth here:—
'Tis made of bits of truth woven into one;
Nothing is said herein but what hath been
Under the sun of day, or stars of night—
There's many a Rachel, many a Ruth,
And many a Reuben Brooks about the world.

Night draws her dark blue curtains round the world,
Fretted with yellow spots, of workmanship
So wonderful—woven at the loom of heaven.
Afar and near, o'er every hill and dale,
The city lies—and north, south, east, and west
Thousands of dwellings with their chimneys stand;
Their little streams of smoke going toward heaven,
Now growing less and less, and being lost there—
No horizon but the faroff housetops.

Dim twilight has departed, night has come:
It is a starry night in January,
And I am wandering about the streets.
All day, the flakes of snow have fallen fast—
Flickering and dancing beautifully
Down from above, amid the fog and smoke
Of the great town, finding a restingplace
At last, on windowsills or roofs, in streets and courts:
Now it has ceased, and the gray sky
Has changed into the colour of deep blue.
I shiver, for it is a frosty night:
The streets and housetops are as white as milk,
And twinkling stars have speckled all the blue—
The blue roof roofing o'er these myriad roofs
Which in their turns roof o'er the strangest things—
Loves, hatreds; bliss, despair; guilt, innocence.
Beneath one roof four rosy children sleep,
All nestled close together in one bed,
Their heads just peeping from between the sheets,
And wrapt in homemade nightcaps—white as snow:

And on their pretty faces sleepeth peace.
Beneath another do toss the slaves of sin,
And on their faces writheth grim remorse.

So now the din and hum of day is gone,
And night has brought its silence to the world,
Which too is broken, ever and anon,
By the poor harlot's hollow sickly laugh,
The foolish drunkard's wild and wayward song,
The steady measured steps of watchmen's feet.
Along the streets the broken rows of lights
Are glimmering, lost in the distant haze.

ON this same winter midnight, far away
Over white hills and white valleys—silent,
With the yellow moon and stars above them—
Red Mars, the trembling Pleiades, faroff and cold
The latter almost hid in the blue heights;
A woman's heart is aching in a village—
A little village embosomed among the hills
Under a white housetop—white with snow,
A snug house, hid in appletrees, it is—
Now leafless all their frosted sparkling branches—
A snug bedroom with a curtained bedstead:
Within the curtains is a woman lying
(A man beside her wrapt in a deep sleep);
Upon her face the broken moonbeams flicker,
Through a chink in the curtains. Ah! I see it
Just above the bedclothes, rugged, wrinkled,
And a crosied homemade cotton nightcap

Wrapt about that head so full of care:
No sleep for her —she is pondering, thinking
Of Ruth, the damsel, her rosycheeked daughter,
Who in her giddy youth, left home and went
To the faroff smokewrapt town of sin,
To be wrecked and lost 'mid the billows thereof.

Poor woman! and thou also knowest Care —
How busy his chisel hath been about thy cheeks!
How deep the furrows and thick!—But I forget!—
I must go back to London whence I came.

I ENTER now a dismal dreary place
Leading down to an archway black as night:
The houses rise up high upon each side,
And all the glory of the night is hid,
Save a long strip of the blue heaven,
Studded with a few glimmering golden stars.

Down here I go, a watchman by my side —
A tall strong man, drest in a watchman's garb,
With a face fat and red, and bloated much;
And two great glimmering ox eyes set in it.
In him the love of what is beautiful—
The soft and tender heart, and all those things
The spirit of a man doth venerate,
Seemed dead or fast asleep: and yet down deep
(As we shall see), a heart with love in it,
And Christlike pity, beateth in his breast.
Now I had seen this man an hour before,

And talked with him of things which made my heart
Beat faster—of sad things seen in the night—
Of the misery and sorrow he had seen,
Dwelling beneath the starry sky of night:
And he essayed to show to me these things,
That seeing I might feel and understand.

So now you try and see what I did see.—
Under this archway he brought out his lamp,
And into a dark corner threw the light:
And there there seemed to lie a heap of rags.
O would that it had been! but it was not:
I looked intently—felt it for myself—
It was a heap of life—six hearts beat there—
Six little hearts—twelve eyes were there
Curtained with white lids, each with a fringe.

All higgledypiggledy there they lay;
And their rough hair, wayward, unkempt,
Was scattered on the pale white face of each,
Their arms and legs entwined like ivyboughs,
They lay nestled together for the warmth,
Like six little housesparrows in their nest:
Yet these, though human hearts did beat in them,
Had a hard nest, made of the cold damp stone—
No mother to brood o'er and keep them warm.

These children were all wrapt in rags and shreds,
Bits of old clothes, pinned, stitched, or tied in knots
About their forms. And one, by her meek face,

And delicate features, and lank scattered hair,
I knew to be a girl—I kissed her cheek,
And, like a marble statue, it was cold.

Never shall I forget how my heart throbbed,
Full of a yearning great, unspeakable—
My heart did seem to melt for pity's sake.
I could have clasped them to me, kept them warm
Forever: and in that earnest hour
I hated all the wild philosophies,
And all the pride and pomp of little man—
Hated all with an awful hate, and yearned:—
O could the PROPHET of Nazareth come again,
With solemn footsteps walk through this dark world,
With open arms to welcome, and great heart,
And downbent head and lowly looks;
Teaching men meekness and simplicity,
And love for all mankind however poor:
That from His lips once more into men's hearts
The music of Eternity might flow!

At last the watchman woke them with his voice,
And dreamily and frightened they looked up,
And shrunk back from the glaring of his light.

And other heaps he showed me many a one—
For nightly to these dark holes children crowd,
As bees do to their hives, when twilight spreads.
Alas! alas! it seemeth very sad
That little children with undying souls

Should live and sleep like cattle on the hills
(Or worse—they have their mangers, stalls, and folds
To rest and shelter them when the night comes)—
Their only home the great wide world,
Roofed over with its mighty azure roof—
Though tinseled with a myriad yellow specks,
A waste and howling wilderness to them.
It maketh my heart feel so sorrowful,
And these tears flow while I do tell it you.

The watchman felt the scene which you just saw:
I spied two big tears creep down his red cheeks—
No crocodile tears—tears hot with love;
And though he hummed a tune for bravery's sake,
I knew that pity gnawed at his heart's core.
He took the slender girl in his strong arms,
And like a fearful bird she held aback—
She knew him only as a foe to her.
But now in him the dead cold sense of law
Was crushed by the almighty power of love—
He pressed her to him, and filled her ears full
Of promises of a nice home, and warm bed;
Not in stern tones, but cooings like a dove.
I blessed the man with whispers silently,
For this his pity and greatheartedness.
And so he made her his, and took her home.
There is some beauty in each human breast—
A little flower among the tangled weeds,
A precious vein of gold amid the ore:
There is a way unto all hearts—a door,

If we knew where, to knock and enter in.

Next to this little maid our hero lay:
His name was Reuben Brooks, though all the boys
Did know him by another funnier name.
He was a boy of strong and robust make—
Had weathered nine hard winters, which he knew
And had good cause to know: the autumn days
Were bittered by the dread of coming snow;
And, like a sunbeam on a winter's morn,
The hope of springtime made his young heart glad
Through all the weary darksome winter days.
And yet the spring brought nothing unto him
But rays of sunlight, broken and defiled.
'Tis true the wild flowers grew in April meads,
And birds sang songs all day in fields and woods,
And every breeze and rill made music too:
But Reuben knew nought of these sweetest things—
Deep in the courts and streets of the great town,
He heard nought but its ceaseless trafficking,
Its deafening clamor and clangor, hum and din.
If you had told him all about the flowers—
The sweet forgetmenots by the brookside,
Their little blossoms all so blue and meek,
The beautiful buttercups with their golden heads,
The lowly daisies with their fringe of white,
Meadowsweet so odorous, bluebells too,—
He would have looked at you so wonderingly,
And thought that you talked of a better land
Of which one day he heard a good man preach

Down in the alley where his mother lived.

But, as I told you, he was nine years old—
No shoes upon his feet, capless his head:
His trousers once had been a grayish tweed,
But now all colours, just below the knees
Ending in a quaint fringe of irregular shreds.

To tell his life to you from birth to death—
To make you see him, in these evening talks,
Gambol and waste away his boyish days;
Grow into manhood—love a pretty lass,
To have his love all broken, and in wrath
To cross the foamy sea—live a wild life
Full of romance and passion: and at last
To die in the great city of his birth;
His mother's blue eyes gazing on his face,
Like a dove's eyes, when on a summer's eve
She sits on the nest's edge gazing upon the young.

NIGHT TWO: HIS MOTHER AND HER VILLAGE HOME.

NOW we will leave the busy city's gloom,
And go unto the village among the hills:
Walking together we'll go thitherto.

Wending our way along the dusty road,
We journey many a long and weary mile:
The green and yellow meadows on each side,

And hedgerows with sweet blossoms marking them.
And now we come to where the road is hedged
By a low rough stone wall quite capped with moss,
Bedecked also with many crannied flowers,
To right: to left by a dark wood of pines.
Just by the wall do ten tall pinetrees tower
Into the welkin, and close by these stands
A timeworn signpost pointing down a lane,
The name of a village written thereon,—
The village which we seek among the hills:
A homely, funny name, see—QUARRYNEST.

A long embowered leafy lane, with banks
Hiding the fields from view, almost the light.
About a furlong down there are some steps
Going up the left bank of this leafy lane,
Worn in the middle through the many feet:
Then getting o'er a stone, across the path,
Brought from the quarry and let in the earth,
We go along a footpath, through some cornfields,
Green in the spring and yellow in the autumn;
And then we come to what has been a quarry,
Wherein a village is now snugly built—
So snug and low, the tallest chimneypot
Is lower than the poppies in the cornfield.

Yonder it lieth, so beautiful picturesque!
The quarry's shaggy shelvy jutty sides
Tower up around it, like the battlements
Of a walled city of the olden time.

The curling bluish columns of thin smoke
Go up and mingle with the higher blue;
The hum made by the children's merriness,
Mixed with the songs of birds, comes unto us:
It seems so beautiful to look upon,
And listen to the quiet hum thereof!
A pretty village in a rugged quarry!
Beauty lying so cozy in the lap of strength!
Like a rosy baby in its mother's.
Now, getting o'er another steppingstone,
We'll go down to the village and walk through!

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And, first of all, there is the village school:
Outside, a flock of children at their games—
The girls with pitchers playing at hopscotch,
Their pitchers, shards of flowerpots or plates,
Red, white, yellow—every shape and hue,
Their spaces marked upon the ground and numbered.
Then boys playing at marbles, with their rings
Taking up all the road, their stakes
A group of small stone marbles in the ring;
They with their taws, agate, china, or stone,
Driving the marbles out with loud huzzas,
Their chatter and clamor like a rookery's.
Then boys with tops, as busy as can be,—
Some with their whiptops travelling down the lane,
And others with their pegtops fast asleep,
They on their hands and knees to hear them hum,
Putting their ears close to them, full of glee.

Then you would come unto a mossy wall,
With a sweet gilliflower on the top,
Ready for you to pluck it—down below,
As in a pit, a cot and garden ground,
Wellnigh lost in ivy, chimney and all,
Only the red chimneypot peeping out;
And so low lying that the appletrees
With their white blossoms were below your feet.
The garden in a chasm made for stone
Long long ago, and for the walls thereof
Three rugged stony banks, where there do grow
Wallflowers, mosses, creepers numberless:
To reach it you must go down through a mizmaze
Of eldertrees, and ivy and woodbine,
And in the summer twined convolvuluses—
Making it in everlasting twilight.

Going on a few yards further you would see
A house as high above you, reached by steps;
And in the yard the father had his sty,
And in it a fat pig; the boys also
Had rabbitcoops, with rabbits old and young,
And many colours—black and white and brown.
Beside almost each door there hung a cage,
Prisoning a lark, blackbird, or thrush,
Who sang rapt songs all through the livelong day
Unto the housewife as she did her work:
Between the children's music and the birds
There was no want of music at these homes.
Moreover all the lanes were carpeted

With greenest grass, this everywhere bedecked
With blossoms manifold and manyhued:
And many hens did scratch about the lane,
Some with their chickens—pretty little things!
And on the windowsills were flowerboxes,
Whence blossomy stalks and sprays climbed up
Holding to anything they could—at last,
Hiding the very windowpanes from view,
And only letting in thin bars of light.
And in the gardens just before the doors,
Through all the summer, flowers hid the earth,
Filling the air with odours, O so sweet!

It was so pleasant on a summer's eve
To see the cotter sitting by the door
Jolting a little one upon his knee,
The mother toss her babe high in the air
And catch it,—sing a cooing babysong,
The other youngsters romping all about;
And hear the blackbird's last song trickle out
Broken and quavering from his ruffled throat
As water from a wellspring, foamy and fresh.—
The mellow notes floating upon the air
And mingling with the balmy fragrance there
Arising from the garden's lake of flowers.
All in the stillness of the summer twilight
There, in that snugbuilt nest among the hills,
Old mother Nature coo'd her lullaby
At twilight, sweeter, softer, than elsewhere,
Wooing the children of toil to sweet rest.

Looking upon it from the steppingstone,
It lies so still and nestlike at your feet
And seems as though some pilgrims journeying
Wayworn through Time unto Eternity
Had come on this secluded walledin place,
And said—Here will we live hid from all storms
And build a nest and rear our little ones
Where the wind cannot shake us (for wise man
Like skylarks, builds his nest upon the ground),
Until the time come when we must depart,
And take our long last journey to our home.
But twilight grows to darkness as we gaze—
Old giant Night comes, in black garments clad
Walking across the world from east to west
Following the day o'er hills and woods and seas,
With stars and silence in his hand aloft,
And scattering dreams and peace along his way,
Even in this little village among the hills—
For the lads and lasses sweetest visions,
Of kisses, sweethearting, and honeymoons,
Homes clad with ivy, gardens full of flowers,
Children with reddest cheeks and prettiest eyes,—
Nothing but blue and rainbows in the heavens;
The grandfather's and grandmother's also,
With visions of sweet peace and endless rest,
In the better country where there is no woe—
Then the dawn coming calling them to work.

Well!—so much for the village,—but the cot
We saw that winter midnight clad in snow:

Which is it out of all these pretty homes?
Going along the lane right through the village,
We find the house nearest the setting sun:
Leaving the deep green lane, by old stone steps
Up the steep bank, you see a wicket gate
Between two mossy walls—lifting a latch
You open the gate, whereat the hinges creak,
And from within a dog begins to bark;
Then going on beneath a leafy arch,
You find the cottage hid in appletrees:
And beyond an orchard, lying between
The garden with its many flowers and plants,
And the rough craggy wall which Nature built.
It is a lovely garden, as could be—
The gravel path lined with thin quarryslabs,
With flowers of every size and shape and hue
Growing there as a border to the garden—
Fragrant warriors with bloodred blossoms,
Tall sunflowers gazing downward like small suns,
Hollyhocks of many colours, foxglove stalks,
The blossoms clustering as thick as bees
Swarming in summer round some bush;
With multitudes besides—'twould fill a page
To tell their names and colours and sweet scents.
And here, from when the east was streaked with red
Until the west was purple—butterflies
Did chase each other, or rest on the flowers
(For beautiful things love beautiful things)
And bees went humming on from flower to flower
Until they filled their honeybags with honey,

Or loaded themselves with wax till they were tired:
And goldfinches built in the appletrees.

Entering the house we see the man and wife:
The man has but just done his homely meal,
And is now going back unto the farm
To mind and feed the sheep under his care,
With Cain his faithful friend—a shepherd dog.
A meek forbearing man he seems to be—
His grave face weatherbeaten and sunburnt,
With two gray eyes and crowsfeet around them
Especially if he smile. His hair gray too—
A rugged face withal, yet one can see
The wind and sunlight have not done it all,
But silent storms and battles in his heart.
The woman sitteth in her rockingchair,
Her face deep in a lilac sunbonnet,
(You saw it last time in a crosied nightcap
And also saw the wrinkles Care had made).
Long years ago she sat in this same chair,
Long long ago, and rocked her Ruth to sleep,
A baby then—and now she rocked and sang
To hush the gnawing sorrow in her heart—
Hush it to sleep (but ah! it would not sleep)—
The sorrow for her wayward daughter Ruth—
Ruth then, Ruth now: a mother's love is true.

Ruth was the firstbegotten, wellbeloved,
A beautiful child—such little skyblue eyes!
The loveliest ever born, her mother said—

A little way beyond the truth perhaps
(For every mother loveth much her babe:
More beautiful than any other child
It is unto her—softer hair; or eyes
Bluer and prettier; redder plumper cheeks;
Or fatter stronger limbs;—somehow, somewhere,
It is the beautifullest and the best,
And worth more to her than the yellow gold
Hid in the mines of California;
Nay! should you bring her wagonfuls of gold
Piled up—drawn by strong horses—say to her,—
Give me your child, all this is yours!
And bring logicians and philosophers
With all their books and learning, could they prove
Her baby was not pretty? nay, forsooth,
She'd press it to her bosom—laugh them all to scorn.)
And now she could not bear to think of her,
And sang to drive away her cankering care.
What was that hymn we heard the murmur of
Just ere we came unto the cottage door?
That was the hymn which she so often sang
For to beguile the sorrow from her heart.
She learnt this hymn when she was but a child
As merry and frolicsome as a child could be:
And taught it Ruth in later happy days.
And now she crooned it as she did her work—
Oft in the summer you might hear this hymn
Steal through the open casement sweet and soft;
To mellow music flowed the words as here:—

FAR away beyond the stars,
Where the sunlight never streams,
And the moonlight never beams,
And the starlight never gleams;
There is a Land sin never mars:
Far away beyond the stars—
Far away, far away.

Far away beyond the stars,
There the great GOD in His might
Fills it full of golden light;
And there are no clouds or night
In the Land, &c., &c.

Far away beyond the stars,
Where sad sorrows never go,
There there is no want or woe,
Bitter tears do never flow,
In the Land, &c., &c.

Far away beyond the stars,
There the people never sigh,
Little children never die,
Little babies never cry,
In the Land, &c., &c.

Far away beyond the stars,
There no wrong or harm is said;
And they never want for bread,
But they are with manna fed,
In the Land, &c., &c.

Far away beyond the stars,
There the grass is always green,
And the flowers are ever seen,
And there's nothing base or mean,
In the Land, &c., &c.

Far away beyond the stars:
If we serve the LORD Most High
Whilst we live—then, when we die,
With us will the angels fly
To the Land, &c., &c.

Far away beyond the stars,
We shall play, and laugh, and sing,
We shall hear the great bells ring
In the Temple of the KING:—
In the Land, &c., &c.

Far away beyond the stars,
We shall live for evermore,
From all death and sorrow sure
Where all things are good and pure,—
In the Land, &c., &c.

om the merry days of merry childhood,
rds—through multitudes of summer flowers
ers and summers—to wrinkles and gray hairs,
saw this vision of childhood in her heart,
a traveller lost in a burning desert,
s visions of a dream-like heavenly city—
onial temples, palaces of gold,
heavenlier beauty than his lips can tell.
Rachel Millwood trod the path of life,
first through flowery meadows, alongside
merry rippling rills, as merry as they;—
rough darkness thick and black, Cimmerian,
rough weeping storms of fierceness tigerlike,
rough howling wildernesses of despair,
d quagmires and abysses of great woe;—
ll, in the stormiest storm this hymn
ng in her ears, like music from afar—
ce bells across the hills in summertime—
youth, as from a Pisgah, she had seen
is city, far away beyond the blue—
is golden city and its flowerdecked fields;
e river also, like the willowy brook
at flowed adown the valley merrily,
ly one brimful of honey and milk;
nks covered with the sweetest odoured flowers;
d in her youthful heart she pictured thus:—
reet honey—soft milk—O how beautiful!
sides, no tears, or trouble, hunger, pain—
kneel down 'mid the blossoms on the banks,
nd and lean o'er (as boys do at the rills)

And have my fill—sweet honey and soft milk!
And then to pluck a pinaforeful of flowers,
Make necklaces and chains and wreaths and balls
To play with and bedeck myself—so fine!
(O this beautiful hope of stormtost souls
Drifting upon the billowy sea of Time—
A Polestar glimmering in the blackest night—
The Star of Bethlehem glimmering in the blue!—
Still glimmer on the mariners till the dawn,
O Star of the nations—beautiful star!)

While Ruth was yet a happy little girl,
A brother came to keep her company;
But one dawn, while as yet the bud
(Like a child's eyes awaking from sweet sleep,
Halfopened) had not become a blossom—
Yet lovelier—(for sometimes the bud
Excels the flower) a wind came from the north,
And the bud closed up again and withered—
And so he died when yet a little boy,
Just at the age when little ones are prettiest.

Two days before he died he found a thrush
Lying on the path beside the garden gate;
Killed by some mishap, yet each feather smooth—
The thrush that always sang his evensong
Atop of the tall peartree—this they knew,
For ever after not a song was sung—
Perhaps he sang his happy soul away
In some sweet rapturous song—who knows?

This the child loved, and kissed its speckled breast;
The selfsame day he got a little knife
And plunged into the thrush's whitish throat
To find out where the *moozic* was, he said—
The blood gushed, that was all—no music there,
Whereat he wondered and his mother smiled.
And now calm and unruffled he lay dead—
The light that gilded his blue eyes and face
Gone, leaving nought but shadows in its place;
The music of his voice, kisses and laughs,
Gone like the thrush's; and that inner voice
Stirring melodious, which none heard but her—
Too subtile were its tones—was also gone.
Now that sweet musicmaker flown unseen,
How strange!—the cunning fingers all withdrawn
Mysteriously, and all the music hushed.
Full oft she kissed his brow so marblelike,
Dropped tears thereon and spake to him;
Credulous as the child at whom she laughed:
No music came—if she had pierced his breast
Blood would have answered to it—nothing else.

So Ruth grew up till she became a maid,
All without any friends or company,
Save village girls who went to the same school,
And the bees and butterflies and flowers.

THERE is one place which we must go and see—
The haven where for shelter Ruth would hide,
From all the little April storms of youth.

Sometimes the schoolgirls mocked—called her hard names,
Sometimes her mother rebuked her for some fault,
Sometimes she wished she had a brother, then
She should be happy—now she felt so sad.
So she would go unto this little room,
Wasting her woe in tears, till none was left:
And when the April shower of tears was past
The light burst from her heart—her eyes and face
Beaming and radiant as the sky in May.

A pretty little bedroom, nine feet square,
With a white sloping ceiling, and the walls
Papered with a manycoloured paper,
Full of pictures of sowing, harvesting,
And many other scenes of village life.
Two chairs rushbottomed, a curtained bedstead
With flowerdecked curtains, valance like to them;
Also a pretty patchwork counterpane,
And a leaden window with diamond panes
Down in a deep recess over against it.
Over the fireshelf her first sampler hung,
Framed, rough and quaint, with grayish ash;
Beside it hung her likeness likewise framed,
Painted in oilcolours by a village painter,
With touches of Nature, though so quaint and rude.
Upon the shelf there were four tortoiseshells
Pretty and mottled—bought at a fair
When young Ruth's mother was a merry lass;
Also three vases—two made of green glass,
The other of blue earthenware, and full

Of everlasting flowers, yellow and white;
One green vase was quite full of quaking grass,
The other of a soft and feathery bloom
Growing in ditches or in sedgy brooks—
I love the blossom, but forget the name.
Upon a chest of drawers there lay three books—
A Bible, in strong leathern covers wrapt,
Her mother's Bible, fingermarked, tearstained,
With many dogsears, and a name illwrit—
RACHEL MILLWOOD.—Every afternoon
She came up here to read the blessed Book,
And pray to her great FATHER earnestly:
And the great FATHER stooped to this poor woman,
And fed her soul with manna day by day.
Besides this there was Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress,
And a little book bound in red covers;
It was a book of poems writ by a man
Who loved the brooks and fields, and woods and hills,
And gave the little children lollipops.
And when they saw him coming down the street
They always crossed the road and walked by him
For him to pat their little rosy cheeks.
And when the children going for a walk
With mother or father e'er did see this man
They pointed to him with their little hands,
Saying with their little tongues, There goes the man
Who pats our cheeks and gives us lollipops.
And often when the boys came home at night
From fishing, nutting, or blackberrying,
They saw him—sitting down by the rill's edge,

His elbows on his knees, and his face hid
Down in his hands—he seemed gone fast asleep.
Yet he was more awake than all who dwelt
Down in that village—in his brain
A thousand thoughts did live—a world of thoughts.
Sometimes the weary shepherd at twilight
Would meet him going o'er the neighbouring hills
Too deep in thought to see him as he passed.
He always had with him a handful of flowers—
Violets, cowslips, buttercups, bluebells,
According to their time of blossoming.
By trade he was a stonecutter, and hewed
Along the roadside, at big heaps of stones,
Resting at intervals when his arm ached;
And very often, in the summertime,
He caught himself wiling away the time
Aleaning on the handle of his hammer,
Watching a butterfly flitting about,
Or listening to the wild song of some bird;
And then he would begin with faster strokes,
For though the work was hard the pay was poor,
And he had little ones to clothe and feed.
Now if you had been travelling that way,
You might have passed by and he would not know,
For he was often making some sweet lay,
His hammer going to the music of his heart:
And he was happy, though a stonebreaker—
Under his cotton smock his heart beat free,
And melodies were gushing evermore.
He laughed at all the pride and pomp of rank,

And knew the worthlessness of tinseled rags:
And in his heart of hearts looked down upon
All kings and princes—scorned their haughty words
And all their bloodwon trophies, with a smile—
As a great mastiff does a lapdog's bark:
He knew man's greatness lieth in his soul,
Not in his garments—he was great and wise.
And he dwelt in this village in the quarry—
The chaffinch hops about for many days,
To find a fit spot for her mossy nest—
And he a poet found a poet's home.
The people knew him as the Village Poet;
Most thought him strange, and some a fool—
Quite daft—only a few, who knew his heart,
Bowed unto him as to a greater man,
Not with an outward sign, but in their hearts.

And this small book with the red lids was his:
The lines and words being the poor outward signs,
Of wonderful melodies, which had foamed
Down in his heart, and flowed thence into words.
Just as you see upon a piece of paper,
On which are quaint and curious hieroglyphics
Drawn about five straight lines—upon, between,—
Signs of the melodies which thrilled and throbbed
Of old, down in some great musician's heart:
Now put into these signs so subtilly,
To bear them down through all the ages,
Filling men's hearts with melodies forever:
Otherwise they had died as a bird's song

Upon the air that first had given them voice.

And so he made this book the prisonhouse
Of all the phantoms of his mind and heart.
Homemade it was, not built of polished stones,
But all unhewn and jaggy from the quarry
(Dug from the deep rough quarry of his heart)
In the oldfashioned way which Nature taught—
Here from some cranny in the craggy wall
A little blossom peeped so very meek,
Like a child looking from a castle window;
And in a nook close by a gilliflower:
Then on a ledge you'd see a tuft of grass
And yellow dandelions, and perchance
A moondaisy,—mosses everywhere
So green and velvety, then a crevice
Holding a wallflower root, the many creepers
Adangling down, covered with little flowers
With birdnests in the crannies here and there,
The young ones piping loudly for their food.
Careless and wild as Nature was it built:
Fledglings and flowers embosomed in its strength—
Meek beauty looking grimness in the face.
And in this prisonhouse there were prisoners—
Brave men, true women, lads and lasses too;
Beautiful flowers all colours, singing birds,
Pictures of fields and woods and brooks and towns,
Sweet music: as I said to you before—
E'en every phantom from the poet's heart.
His work was rough: at the great masters' feet

He had not sat. 'Twas not the jingling rhyme
Of bookish versemen, for he learnt his lore
From brooks and fields and flowers and birds and stars.

And Ruth, we said, loved much this little book,
And often oped the door (that is, the lid),
Went in in heart, and held communion
With some fairy being imprisoned there,
And felt their sorrows, also hoped their hopes—
Many a tear dropped down from her blue eyes,
And oftener a smile went o'er her face—
She heard her heart beat reading some lovetale.
So this poor poet did not live in vain,
But, as we see, his small redlidded book
Made manifold melodies in one simple heart.

Besides these, ancient pictures hung about:
And the broad windowboard in the recess
Was hid by flowerpots all through the year;
Oft rubbed with stone, and red as her own cheeks.
And these were full of flowers, all through the year—
Cranesbills white and red, and brighthued tasseled fuchsias,
Dewdrops, hyacinths, tulips, China asters,—
Every flower with blossoms beautiful
She loved much, being so beautiful herself.
In the middle stood a prickly cactus;
By the edge a pot of odorous musk,
With yellow blossoms dangling down the side—
Hiding the red flowerpot altogether.

Outside was fixed a flowerbox painted green,

In which she planted ferns and sweet wild flowers—
Daisies, violets, cowslips, or bluebells,
Digging them up about the fields and woods
In her wanderings, with a rusty knife;
And at the ends thereof did she sow seeds
Of clambering plants—sweetpeas, convolvuluses;
And trained them round the window—whence the threads
Covered with leaves and blossoms, dangled down;
And sometimes crept into the room in summer,
Through the open window of the casement.

So merry May came, like a blueeyed child,
Its face and eyes radiant with happy smiles,
Its lap brimfull of flowers of every hue:
And happy songs agushing from its heart.
About this time the children have new clothes,
To vie with Nature in her newdeckt garb:
Many had got theirs on and felt so great—
Their wayward eyes wandered about their dress
All the day long. And young Ruth often told
Her mother of these things, and longed for some.
But the good mother had not forgotten this—
For many a week had she been saving up
Odd bits of silver, with the secret thought
Of making Ruth the prettiest of them all.
And when one Sabbathday young Ruth came home
With downward looks, and swollen reddened eyes,
Because some girls had made a scorn of her,
Saying, she could not get fine summer clothes;
Then the mother opened to her her good heart,

And showed her all its motherly purposes:
And then she felt above their little scorn.

At last the Sunday came to don the clothes,
Got with such brooding care and cunning thought,
Braided and frilled and sewn so cunningly—
A beaver bonnet with black ribbon trimmed
Costing a handful of hoarded silver bits;
A frock made of pink cotton daintily
With tippet like it, braided round
So wavily, with white fantastic braid;
Some pretty speckled stocking—last, not least
Some sandals fastened with black ribbon, edged
With nice embroidery. The Sunday came
For her to don these clothes, and take a walk,
With mother and father, over the green hills.
As merry as a butterfly was she
When that day came with sunlight and blue skies—
Her eyes did shine and twinkle merrily:
Venus and Mars upon a frosty eve,
Ne'er twinkled faster, or did shine as bright.
Her cheeks were red as blood and fresh as foam:
Her face had such a healthy flowerlike glow,
Just like a plum covered with fine blue dust
While yet it hangs upon the parent tree,
Which if you rub with pocket handkerchief,
Or touch but with your finger, it will go,
And all the dreamy mellow beauty pass
(Not like the face of some poor gaudy girl,
Lathered with soap and flannel till it shines

Like a good housewife's copper teakettle):
And she was lissom as a longtailed lamb,
And every limb did seem so full of life—
She felt that she could mount and fly away.
Her mouth was full of songs all the day long—
Even while she dressed herself at early dawn.
Ah! didn't she gaze into the lookingglass
With artless guileless pride, looking all ways—
Behind, before, and on each side—
Until her mother called her to come down,
And tied her bonnetstrings into a bow,
And ordered all her garments, kissing her—
Each bloodred cheek—with kisses full of love,
Saying, Ah, my girl, these be your golden days!
Thus this blossom, beautiful, immortal,
Dwelt among these other lovely blossoms—
A flower of heaven amid the flowers of earth,
With honey in its heart, the honey of love
And innocence, hid in the blushing virgin bloom.
Here, as we said, she conned the poet's book,
Here piled her hopes up, heap on heap, skyhigh,
Built grand aircastles, tops touching the blue,
Thought sweet lovethoughts—scrawled loveletters—
With many rows of crosses underneath
(Symbols of kisses) to a village lad,
And gloated o'er her lovetoys many an hour.
Here decked herself in ribbons and so on—
Put on with care each article of dress,
Pinned scarf, tied bow a dozen times,
And every time that she did alter it,

Silently her heart said, Think this will please him ?
Here watered flowers, at twilight, from a jug;
And when the twilight deepened, and old Night
Came from the East o'er hills and woods and seas,
With stars and silence in his hands aloft,
She knelt beside her bed and said her prayers,
Then crept beneath the patchwork counterpane,
Upon the pillow laid her tressy head,
And fell asleep and dreamt the queerest dreams.

Fast asleep! right in the core of beauty—
The house itself built on this woody spot,
Bosomed amid the flowering appletrees,
Rich woodnotes quivering among the flowers;
The walls wrapt in a manycoloured robe,—
Woodbine and vine and mossroses;
She in that bed hid by the curtains there—
Fast asleep! right in the core of beauty.

What careless foot could come and crush a flower,
So deep embosomed as this sweet one was ?
What wasp could come and sting the heart of peace ?
Yet in the rosiest apple on the tree
You find a grub agnawing at the core,
And down in Ruth's young heart there was a thought
Which killed all other thoughts and reigned supreme.
I cannot tell to you, my little ones,
How cunningly and silent there it worked
Its silent way, down in her heart of hearts—
Some broken love maybe, or blighted hope,

Or hidden spiritual want or woe.

* * * * *

So Ruth was now wellnigh a woman grown,
And every day seemed to get waywarder;
This pretty village was a cage to her—
She wandered to the brook down in the vale,
And sometimes to the hills away beyond,
But found no peace. A village girl,
Whom she had known and loved, had gone away
To London; and she often heard from her,
Which hearings set her youthful heart aflame:
And round that place her dreams and fancies twined,
And made it to her quite a heaven on earth.
She told her mother all her dreams and hopes,
Who would not see a glimpse of such a thing.
Now though she loved her mother with great love,
Ruth's heart was set on going to that place,
And would not brook denial; for somehow
Some spirit, thought—something she knew not what
And could not help—had come to dwell in her,
And taken place of all her former self:
Her mother saw this change with many a sigh,
And often did she gaze on those wild eyes,
Then cast her own upon the fire and think.

And Ruth did go—her mother's words and tears
Were wasted—for the tearful tenderness
And childlikeness of her old self were gone.
So with foreboding heart did Rachel make

Fit things for her departure, and would try
To gild her cloudlike care with sunny hope.
'Twas all a dream to Ruth, a beauteous dream—
She saw no wilderness, but fields of flowers;
The clouds her mother saw, so thick and black,
To her were full of light and rosy hues.

The morning came at last to take the coach,
And then this merry girl of sweet seventeen
Went, holding a blue bandbox in her hand,
A lad behind her carrying her clothesbox,
Her mother beside her looking very sad—
It seemed like Spring and Winter side by side.
Her mother wept full sore at the goodbye;
Ruth's face was sunny, and she also spake
Such sunny words, as made the mother think
Her cares were foolishness and vanity.
And so she stepped into the coach, and soon
The whip clanged, and the wheels began to whirl.
Scarce had the village vanished out of sight,
Ere Ruth burst out into a flood of tears—
So full of heartbreak was she, and of woe;
And her old self seemed to come back again.

Of what befell her in that faroff town,
And also of the sad fulfilment there
Of all the mother's forebodings so dark;
And how she went and sought for her sweet child,
And walked the dreary streets with weary feet,
And eyes bedimmed with tears bitter as gall,

I will not tell—silence sometimes
Is very eloquent: then let that speak.

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It is the next spring: round that cottage there
The flowers do clamber up so beautifully,
And songs of happy birds quiver around:
You'd think no sorrow could dwell in that cot.—
A woman's heart bleeds, saying silently
All the day long, through weeks and months and years,—
Eh! how I loved her when she was a child!
No mortal knows—more precious than my life!—
What shall I do?—my child! my child! my child!
Her sorrow was too great, unspeakable,
To wrap round with the robe of my poor words—
She never knew how she loved her child till then.

NIGHT THREE: HIS BOYHOOD AND SWEETHEARTING.

LET 's see!—where was it I left off last night?
Oh! I remember, 'twas about the mother—
Her lamentations for her child, poor thing!
Now we'll go back to London whence we came,
And find out Reuben Brooks whom we left there.

* * * * *

'TIS early morn—the sunlight struggles hard
To creep down through the smoke to claybuilt homes
And make them happy. Yonder goes a boy!—

It is the same we left in that stone nest,
Under the archway, on that winter night.
He's found out where his mother used to live:
And, tired of living in the din and smoke,
Is off to seek that home among the hills.

After four sunsets and four dawns he came
Unto the green hills in whose lap
This village lay—was nursed, had sweet songs sung
Unto it by the winds and birds always,
Just when the fifth was crimsoning the west.
That afternoon a dash of rain had dropt,
Making the blossoms fragrant—greener grass—
The skyey music of the lark was hushed
The thrush upon the treetop filled the air
With throbbing melody, a blackbird sang
So soft and sweet, and in a neighbouring copse
Some meek doves cooed, and from the magic throat
Of the brown nightingale, melodious notes
Stole on the twilight air enrapturing
The lad: he seemed as in a fairyland;
And though wayworn and hungry and footsore
(His little feet had measured thirty miles
Since dawn: and but a mouthful had he ate—
A shepherd lad had given him from his dinnerbag—
And though he had plenty of water from the rills,
Hunger is a sharp thorn), yet he forgot
His hunger listening to the songs of birds
And watching far away in the blue East
Skyhigh, some little stars that twinkled there

One by one till all the dome was full.
And now he entered down a leafy lane,
Lowlying, with grassy blossomy banks,
Hedges atop bedeckt with blossoms white:
The branches of the trees met overhead
And made a leafy archway, the abode
Of music all through summer—the birds built
Snug nests—the young ones piped, the old ones sang,
And breezes made a wailing music there.

He found the cottage 'mid the appletrees,
And Rachel sitting at the doorsill there
Busy with her knitting things: to her he told
The woful tale of his unhappy life.
She listened to it all with weeping eyes,
And spake not, for she could not find fit words,
To pour the mighty sorrow from her heart;
And so it surged there like a stormy sea.

At once she loved the lad for poor Ruth's sake,
And made an idol of him—worshipped it—
And half beguiled her heart that he was her:
For he was like her save his two dark eyes.
He filled the house with music, beauty, light:
A music sweeter than the songs of birds—
It warbled in her *heart*—they charmed her *ears;*
A beauty better than the looks of flowers,
A light far brighter than that of the sun,
More subtile—*these* stayed in her *eyes* alone,
They passed down through her eyes into her *heart.*

The sacred time of sorrow was now past
When silence seals the lips, and words are vain:
Yet still the flood was there, and evermore
It flowed out of her heart into his ears
In woful episodes of years gone by,
But would not stop—slipped all away
As dewdrops from the leaves when morn has come:
Yet she told on—it seemed so sweet to tell—
And half the burden of it went from her.

Springtime had come, the time that children love:
Known to them as the days of buttercups
Yellow as gold, and daisies yellow and white.
The woods were full of music manytoned
And clamorous, and the fields around,
Studded so thick with spots of yellow and white,
Had children in them kneedeep in the grass
Plucking the flowers until their laps were full:
Girls threading daisyheads for necklaces
To wear that they might look the prettier;
And boys agathering dandelion stalks
Making a link of each green hollow one,
Then adding link to link to make a chain.
The merry sunlight streamed on them all day,
Save when the shadows of the silvern clouds
Floated over the meadows silently:
And all their faces were quite full of smiles.
And Reuben joined with them with gleeful heart
And laughed and holloaed more than all the rest:
He was as happy as though he was in heaven.

Now the young corn had just begun to peep
Out of the rich brown earth, so Reuben went
Unto the fields to drive the birds away—
The farmer's fields where the old shepherd worked.
A happy lonely life he led all day—
From dusk at morn till dusk at eve,
Taking his victuals with him in a bag:—
Made whistles from the reeds beside the brook;
Made popguns out of alder from the hedge;
Found birdnests in the hedges, trees, and banks,
And stole the pretty painted eggs from them,
Made holes in either end and sucked the yolk,
Then threaded them upon long tasseled grass.
At night Rachael would teach him how to read,
Or tell him tales of years that were gone by.

This farmer had a daughter six years old,
The sweetest little thing! Miriam by name:
And oft she came to Reuben's village home,
With butter in a basket: and sometimes
She'd come to tea on Sundays. These two played
And talked together at odd meetingtimes,
And neither of them knowing other youth
They took a liking to each other, and
Ne'er parted but each kissed the other one.
Thus, Reuben working still upon the farm—
Happy enough, did months and years fly past.

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One day, Miriam had spent the afternoon

With Rachael, and when twilight came abroad
Reuben prepared with shoebrush, soap and comb
(Making himself look spruce he knew not why)
To go with Miriam to the farmyard gate.
They had the kiss as usual and shook hands
And Miriam's face blushed bloodred to her hair
And Reuben saw it—slowly he walked home
Awondering why it was. And after that
She who did always talk and seem so free,
Now lost her tongue and would not speak at all—
They kissed not when they parted—had shy looks—
Looked not at one another—cast their eyes
At something else—then their hands missed:
They did it altogether awkwardly—
With nothing of the gracefulness of yore.
Now Miriam had blue eyes—as blue as heaven,
And Reuben's, as we know, were black as sloes—
Blue eyes love black, and black love blue:
This throweth light on many a headlong love.

At last their loves did see each other plain—
The blue eyes through the black, black through the blue.—
One day from out the book with the red lids
A lovetale unto Miriam Reuben read,
Sitting beneath an appletree in the orchard:
In her lap she had some cowslip blossoms,
Making with them a long yellow necklace.
Reuben had come upon this tale by chance
(He often read unto her from this book):
At the beginning nought was said of love,

But as it flowed, it bore on their two hearts,
As a brook would two blossoms from her lap,
And by and by, it told about a pair
Who loved each other and yet did not know;
And after telling of their inward thoughts,
Yearnings, and feelings, so mysterious,—
How they wandered through the fields together,
Drank water from the rills, plucked the wild flowers,
Hunted the lissom grasshopper in the tall grass,
Gathered the watercresses from the brook,
And wished that they could live for evermore.
Thuswise it told their outward looks—
The lass's sweet blue eyes and curly hair
And summerapple cheeks, saying at last
Her name was Miriam. Miriam saw herself
As in a lookingglass—Reuben read no more—
He could not (there was something in his throat)
And Miriam blushing bloodred looked at him
And he at her—his black eyes at her blue;
Their two souls saw each other through their eyes,
And spake whole volumes eloquent, whole poems,
In a language we shall learn in heaven—
Now we only talk in scrawling symbols.

After this silent but deepmeaning speech
Of burning eloquence, nought did they speak
Of love: each knew it all, their hearts kept time,—
Their souls had spoken—was not that enough?
And every day was sunny, and all flowers
Were beautiful for many merry months.

In Spring they helped each other toss the hay,
In Summer plucked the fruits—currants, red, black, white;
Gooseberries, yellow, red, and green; and plums,
Strawberries, and raspberries; apples, pears
At last—then came the busy harvest time
With all its pleasures: thus the time flowed on
As merrily as a rill. But a winter came
And froze the rippling rill, and stopped its song.

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NOW Miriam's father knew nought of her love;
But saw it one eve as he walked abroad.
Nigh to the farm, across a cowslip field,
There was a copse, down in a hollow place,
Where Reuben oft with Miriam spent sweet hours,
Until the dreamy twilight turned to night,
And all the doves stopped cooing, and the rill
Did sing alone by them its happy song.
One night he wandered forth among his fields,
Viewing his cattle, as they grazed thereon;
And making bargains in his busy brain.
Returning home he came down through the copse:
And there he saw these two sitting alone
All in the twilight, wrapt in love and dusk,
Nor stayed to question them, or let them speak;
But in his foamy wrath drave Miriam home,
And filled her ears, where yet the coo of love
Still murmured, with a storm of fiery words.
Poor Reuben too was threatened ne'er to step
Upon his lands once more while he had breath.—

Expostulations uttered he in vain :
The farmer through his anger heard them not ;
It drowned them. So the farmer went,
And Reuben saw him not again on earth.
He stayed there thinking of this sad mishap,
Until his brain was giddy, and he lay
Lengthwise upon the grass beside the rill :
The doleful owls did hoot up in the trees ;
The music of the rill, erewhile so sweet,
Seemed now as sad as death, and he did wish
It were the sea that he might plunge therein.
And there he stayed until the gray dawn crept
Over the Western hills, and then he rose
As in a dream, weary betook him home—
A broken man wet with the dew of heaven.

NIGHT FOUR: HIS WILD WANDERINGS.

SO now poor Reuben, lovesick and forlorn,
With his heart full of lovethoughts, went about
He knew not where or why. I pity him.
Round this girl his heart's tendrils ivylike
Through months, aye years—at first unknowingly—
Had clung as ivy doth unto a tree,
Stronger and stronger for the storms that raged.
The little tendrils once so green and soft,
Now brown and hard, and of much greater girth,
Fed by the very lifeblood of two hearts
Now rudely torn asunder, limb from limb,
The blood all dripping down—what alchemy

Shall tie the veins and stop the rush of blood?

Love maketh men and women fools, my boys,
The high and low, foolish and wise alike—
Philosophers forget philosophies,
And business men their maxims, many and wise,
Scholars their books, and maids their household work:
Great men their greatness, and become quite daft.
Stargazers wrapt in studies of the night,
Telling the stars, and measuring the great sky,
Quit these grand things, forsooth! to dream
Of women and sweet love and wedded life.
Deep is the heart of woman—O so deep
Beneath the sunny ripples!—wise is she,
Wise as a serpent to beguile man's heart,
And charm him with the music of her voice.

At last young Reuben in his wild despair
Resolved to be a sailor, so he went,
In this despair's great strength, covered with tears
And blessings, to the nearest seaport town,
And hired himself on ship with a stern heart.

And the ship sailed from shore, and Reuben saw
Across the offing the white rockbound coast
Of England die away in the dim mist.
He thought to leave his woe behind on land,
But it came with him, ever haunting him;
And oft he watched the long line of white foam
Behind the vessel, and as often wished

That he might cast his body thereinto,
And with one leap drown all his lovelorn woe.

But Time the great Physician came with balm,
And bound up all his wounds, and healed them too;
So that the gnawing pain went all away—
Leaving the memory of what once had been.

So the ship sailed across the foamy sea,
And the sun rose from out the sea at morn,
And sank therein at even splendidly,
Save when they anchored at some foreign shore.
Strange things he saw, strange men, and his young soul
Grew larger, wilder—yet sometimes he thought
For moments, of the village 'mid the hills,
And of its memories dark and sunshiny.

Thus did they sail from port to port, all things
Seeming to help them, till disaster came—
They met a fearful storm, which in its wrath
Tossed them upon the billows; and they fought
Against it, but far better might the wren
Fight the great eagle and peck at its claws.
It laughed them all to scorn, and tossed them high
Toward heaven, until the little ship gave way
And broke in splinters almost, and all went
All topsyturvy into the deep sea—
Like to a boiling cauldron it did foam.
How the rest fared our Reuben never knew,
Of men or ship or cargo; but he grasped

On a huge piece of flotsam—got a hold,
Was driven he knew not where, saw but the sky—
All else was hid by the great hills of foam.
But by and by the great storm went to sleep,
And all was hushed, save a low lullaby
Of the old sea ; afar the sun went down
Into the waters, and the twilight came ;
Also the stars in heaven—Reuben alone
Floated upon the lonely sea and prayed.
Just as the gray dawn lit the eastern sky,
He saw some rocks before him—very soon
He found himself upon the yellow strand
Quite weak and weary, and the seafowl cried
As they flew past him, and he felt quite glad,
Even in his misery, that he had
Some living thing to bear him company.
A wild land it was—he saw no bounds—
But a great forest bordering on the sea ;
And through it did a mighty river run,
Foaming and roaring to the sea's wild surge.

Here he found fruits of wondrous size and taste,
On which he fed—saw birds of wondrous hues,
And trees of wondrous girth, and clambering plants
Which seemed to climb to heaven and blossom there.
And by this mighty river he did go
For many many days, and saw no face
Of human being, and no claybuilt homes
With the blue smoke going from their chimneypots ;
But in his heart he wished to see such things.

The land he roamed in is America,
The mighty river Méchassipi, called
The Father of waters; in this boundless land
For years he wandered—through great solitudes
And prairies measureless, o'er mountains high,
Where condor vultures dwelt on pinnacles
Heavenkissing. Here he heard afar
Niagara's many waters sing aloud
As though it were the requiem of a world.
Through Texas' prairies; through forests, over hills
Of Wyoming; through California
Where the Sierras tower and there is gold.
Landscapes of heavenly beauty did he see,
Flowers of all shapes and colours, sunsets grand
Upon the mountains—for their pinnacles
And minarets seemed wrapt in fire and light,
Changing into all colours, seeming built
Of ruby and amethyst, amber and gold,
Crowned with the azure heaven and yellow stars.

And yet he was not happy in this land,
No Eldorado was it unto him
(Alas! there is none under our blue heaven
Save in the myths of yore and dreams of youth),
But a Gehenna: is there any man
Who can fly from what dwelleth in his heart?
He was not happy in this loveliness,
But in his weary heart he reasoned thus:—
I love the purple sunsets, crimson dawns,
The grand wild music of the woods and hills,

The rills and brooks and rivers, waterfalls,
Nature's great hymns at twilight and at dawn:
But what is life apart from other men?
The heart grows cold, and life gets burdensome.
I sing and pray to God—He needs it not—
Creation sings to Him, each rill and wood,
They drown my little voice: and if I pray
What shall I pray for? whom?—the birds and beasts?
They have no wants but what are satisfied—
My praise and prayers are nothing unto Him.
Should I not rather find the haunts of men—
The busy crowded city: toil for man,
Spend my heart's love, and my soul's energies,
To do him good?—he needs help, God does not—
Therefore I will return and work for him.

So after many years of wandering,
He left this strange land and went back
Across the foamy deep, unto that town,
That smokewrapt town where he first saw the light.

NIGHT FIVE: HIS ENDEAVOURS AND DEATH.

FLOATING adown the rippling brook of youth,
Borne by the gentle winds of love and hope,
With scented flowers and music everywhere,
It was all happiness and loveliness;
And through as the brook grew into a river,

With less of music and flowers and sunshine,
And bigger waves, and rougher winds sometimes,
There was a pleasure even then to sail
Down with the winds and waves—to listen
Unto their roar and rippling—a wild pleasure.
Yet now on the great sea of human life,
After drifting about at the will of the winds,
To turn round the prow and dash through them,
Down watery valleys and o'er hills of foam,
Waves breaking against it unto writhing spray,
With shallow shoals and jutting rocks below,
Seaweed, flotsam, and icebergs on the face,
And storms and winds and night above—
Sitting there at the helm, the sails unfurled,
Furrowing the deep, while multitudes of barks
Drive past him whither the wild winds do lead.
Out of the deeps he cried to the great God,
And the great God heard him in the deeps,
For He was even beside him though unseen.

Such was poor Reuben's life, and such the point
Which he had come to. Here in the great town
He hired himself to work, thereby to get
Money to buy him food and garments too.
Great plans he laid, and cunning schemes
For the great good of men in misery.
Hard did he toil even to the silent hours
Of midnight—sometimes till the stars grew dim,
And all the east was streaked with ruddy light.
And when he walked along the dingy streets,

And saw the many faces wobegone,
Of men, women, and children, who forsook
The higher laws of life which bring true bliss;
And saw their wretched claybuilt homes, and lives
Like creeping plants with no strong wall or tree
To clamber to—sprawling upon the ground,
Their tender leaves and blossoms all defiled,
And trampled on by careless muddy feet—
Not climbing up toward the azure and stars
(As all true things do—man, or tree, or flower),
His face and heart grew sadder day by day,
And sorrow so divine dwelt in his heart.
And often did he talk to wretched ones,
Who told him tales full of the music of woe—
Not such as polished poets make with toil,
Or skilful bookmakers—told him tales,
Which gushed fresh from their hearts in such true words
That rang like gold; and for accompaniment
Had tears and quivering lips—not some poor instrument,
Like man's poor music—that is false
(Save as a symbol symboling the true),
And like all things of earth shall pass away:
This is true music, even the music of heaven.
His own heart knew what woe was, and somehow
There was such inner music in his words,
Which, when the latter went into true ears,
Did leave the words and slide into the heart,
Which lifted up the curtains thereabouts,
And showed the mysteries of it to his eyes—
Such a mysterious power dwelt in him.

And so his spirit daily gathered strength,
And what was human in him weaker grew:
And hard he worked and thought to bring about
The end of his true aim—till overworked,
He fell quite ill, and laid him down to die,
Wishing that he might live for many years.

It chanced by some good fortune that Ruth
Found out the dwellingplace of this her son,
And saw him and he her,—each knowing not
(Although their souls had never dwelt apart)
How near their bodies were each unto each.
When they did know there were such burning tears,
And strong embraces—then a silence long.

Ah! who would think that was the pretty girl,
We saw in that sweet bedroom far away,
Watering her flowers on twilight summer eves,
And smelling her pet bloodred tulip oft,—
And she herself a flower as beautiful?
But now, alas! like that same tulip broken,
Faded, defiled, and trampled in the dust.
How sad it seems—a broken flower, alas!
That sin should walk about the garden of life,
Crushing immortal blossoms of sweetest hue—
Bloodred tulips, blue forgetmenots in bloom,
The fairest, beautifulest,—O how sad!

And Reuben died, although he wished to live,—
Died, with a smile of peace upon his face,

And murmurings coming from between his lips,
Murmurings of rest and heaven: here they be,
Going to unearthly music—here are the words,
The music is not here—no poet's craft
Could write them, no harp or flute,
No cunning tongue or finger utter it,
'Twas not of earth, but come afar from heaven—
"Far away beyond the stars."
And the soul went asinging this strange song.

And so poor Reuben now is in his grave,
Having a long rest after a life of toil—
A long long rest, but the great work undone—
His great high purposes just blossoming,
When a hand came and plucked them in the bud.
Alas! he spent his life in learning his lifework,
And how to do it, and then fell asleep.
Just like a man who had a piece of land,
And left it while the weeds did grow thereon,
Wandering meanwhile all through the world;
Returning home at last, getting a plough,
And horses, with strong harness girding them—
Laying his plans to plough, harrow, and sow;
Rising some morn at dawn with a strong will,
Digging a ploughshare into the hard earth,
Crying geeup! then falling down a corpse;
The poppies, moondaises, and buttercups
To bloom and fade thereon as heretofore,
But no broad fields of waving yellow corn.

Of how he crossed the narrow isthmus of time
I've told you—not by any beaten road;
But like a traveller through an unknown land,
Who roams at will—through forest—over marsh,
Making with trouble a pathway for himself.
At first you saw him in the reeking marsh
Where adders crawled and sunlight never came,
But broken and defilèd rays thereof;
Coming soon to a land so beautiful—
Meadows all full of flowers innumerable
Of every colour; also full of music
Of zephyrs, birds and bees and little rills
Flooded with sunlight too, and cloudless skies—
Save little April clouds gone in a twink.
You heard the waves arippling on the shore,
And then the bark rasping against the sands;
Saw the wind take the sails and carry it
Beyond the horizon of the waters vast,—
Whither, O whither?—to another country—
Not to be wrecked and swallowed by the sea.

Now I have told you all that I do know—
How from the waters across the neck of land
He went, up hills, down valleys, till he came
Again into the waters—launched and sailed
Upon the ocean of Eternity.
His other truer life, I know not—all is haze,
I've stuttered out this little part of it
Brokenly and awkwardly, for I am but a schoolboy.

NIGHT SIX: MY VISIT TO THE VILLAGE.

YEARS after this I went unto the village
And dwelt there for some days, and saw the mother
(The father he was gone). The dwellingplace
I reached up the stone steps—did find it there
Embowered as heretofore in appletrees,
Ivy, and mossroses. Ruth had come home
And died a happy death, after a life
Unhappy: Miriam too was dead,
And Rachel's face had lost its careworn look,
And wore a smile of peace, as after storms
When all is calm again, a sailor's does.

Therefore the mother was wellnigh all alone—
Save three friends who dwelt with her—three true friends,
Better than kings and counsellors of the earth—
They dwelt deep in her heart—Faith, Hope, and Love.
Also there dwelt with her a little girl
Whom she had found alone amid the world,—
'Mid the cold world—had loved and taken to,
And wrapt her heart round, making her so warm.
Here, in this home I showed to you before,
I talked for hours with Rachel—such sweet hours—
She told me all that I have told to you,
Save the beginning, which I saw myself.
One day unto the churchyard I did go,
Taking this foundling damsel by the hand:
And as we went along she looked so sad—

Her rosy apple cheeks and sweet blue eyes
Had not a little smile to lighten them.
At last we came unto the old churchyard
And entered by a cringing wicket gate;
And in the churchyard an old yewtree stood
Of immemorial age, twisted and gnarled:
Thereon a robin sat trilling a song—
I came quite near and watched him—saw his breast
So bloodstained, and his ruffled throat
Whence quivering music came into mine ears.
Sparrows were chirping, starlings chattering there
Up in the tower—coming thereto with worms
To feed their young ones in their nest of straw.
Suddenly the child stopped by two green graves:
A little one—Ruth's brother's who did die
Just at that age when little ones are prettiest:
The other grave was Ruth's, all newly made,
Marked by the newer love (if such a love
Can e'er be new or old); flowers of sweet hues
Grew round it—newly set with care.
The elder grave had but one buttercup
Yellow as a sovereign on it: then there grew
Round it a row of faded mignonette.

Sometime I stood there wondering why glad flowers
Are planted by sad graves, where hopes and loves
Unutterable are buried in the earth.
Swift as a rill my pensive thoughts did run,
As here my words, the symbols of them, run:—
Our little life is made of clay and gold,

Poor dirt and muck mixed with fine azure and stars ;
Our souls are born and bred upon the ground,
Have their nests there—like the skylark
Who creeps from out the brownish spotted egg
Hid in the grassy field, and gets his food
Out of the muddy earth—then soars aloft
Into the azure where the stars do dwell—
Into the misty azure, and is lost
Singing a song immortal. Just so man
Born of the dust, lives in it, till at last
Shaking the clayey garments from his soul,
Unfettered, with swift pinions, soars aloft
Into the azure of eternity,
Into the country where the yellow stars
Do live enthroned above this little life,—
Soareth aloft singing a song of heaven
With words unearthly and unearthly music—
Sings like the swan till both the song and he
Are gone away into the silent land :
We only know the prelude of them both.
And flowers are stars—born of the earth
They are unearthly, and forever speak
Of immortality, eternity—
Kindred to men and stars, beloved by man :
When a poor brother dies and soars aloft
Whom he would keep with him, he plants these flowers
Upon the earthy grave to speak to him,
With their sweet voices, of eternity,
Azure and stars, and that immortal song.
And when the autumn comes the flowers do fade

n faded: then he thinks of death,
akes the autumntime seem melancholy.

his was autumntime, so my own memories
oughts went to the music of the year—
sad music of eternity,
eath—as everything did die.

utumn had come, the time that poets love—
mn, with eyes as dreamy as a maid's,
ments as manycoloured—all the woods
low and red and green—the hills bedecked
ith yellow cornfields—hedgerows red as blood
ith haws and hips, the brambles black as coal
Vith blackberries—the orchards full of fruit
As rosy as a maiden's blooming cheeks.
The villagers were busy as could be,
From misty morns until the misty eves.
The branches of the fruittrees were well shook
By men and boys with baskets, bags, and sacks;
[illegible] deep in the woods gave way
[illegible] and joyful cries
[illegible] other ones

Making two tiny cups by doing so—
Taking the red cups to some foaming rill,
Leaning down o'er the edge, filling them full
Brimful of water, and then swallowing all—
The vessels and the water which they held.

All found their feet, even the veriest babes,
Held by their mothers kicking on the ground.
Their little eyes twinkling with merriment
Their little cheeks dimpled and ribbed with joy—
Their hearts so full it burst out every way—
From their twinkling eyes and dimpled cheeks,
Also in little splutterings from their mouths.

And not alone the children, everything—
The rabbits left their burrows cautiously,
And frisked and frolicked just outside their holes;
The year's young birds had left their cosy nests
And found their wings and used them wantonly
In the free heavens—had left their piping too,
And tried their tongues with broken songs all day;
From morn till eve the reaper plied his scythe,
The honest sweat dripping from his brown brow
And the tall stalks afalling row on row,
Small innocent flowers with them, red and blue
Cut through to fade and perish in the sun.
Some of the reapers' wives were there, also
Their little ones, who round the shocks of corn
Played at bopeep, or found the murdered flowers

Lengthwise upon the ground with faded cheeks,
And bore them in their laps unto the rill
To let them race each other 'mid the foam—
Now winding through the mazes of the stones,
Now topsyturvy in some whirlpool whirled;
The children keeping pace with their own flowers:
One always crying out, Hurrah!—mine's first!

In other fields the waggons were at work,
The lads with forks piling the sheaves up high,
Singing the while, the teams drawing the loads
While the bells jingled on the horses' heads
Till they got to the farmyard, where they stayed.

And o'er this picture of sweet happiness
The blue sky bended silent and serene;
And now and then the shadows of the clouds
Journeyed o'er hills and valleys, darkening
The woods and brooks and cornfields as they went.

But by and by the trees' own shadows grew
Long as the cornfields were—the mothers then
Took home their children; and from out the woods
The larger children came laden with fruit
Merry as the birds above them. Very soon
The crimson clouds against the west were dull,
The thrush's last song full of melody
Was dead—therefore the reapers with their scythes
Wended their ways homeward, leaving the hills

To the sweet nightingales, and the grand night,
And the unending music of the rills.

Most beautiful of all it was to me
To wander o'er the hills some Sabbath eve
At the witching dreamy hour of twilight,
When villagers left their homes and went to church;
To go through cornfields o'er the hills and listen
As from each little village—tower to tower—
Bells answered bells across the meadowy hills.
Even when they ceased the music strove to live,
Lingering on the twilight air and echoing
Fainter and fainter till it died away—
Yet did not die—it lingered in my ears
Through all that night—I hear it even now.

I felt so happy when among the hills—
The blood rushed through my veins as swift and free
As rills did down the sides of the steep hills—
So swift and free—I think it almost foamed!—
I felt full of my youth again—brimful
As when I went sweethearting long ago.

But when I reached the village, Quarrynest—
The pretty village—stood upon the bank
And saw it lying silent at my feet
Wrapt in a veil as is a maiden's face—
The silken veil of twilight—heard them sing
Down in the church close by a hymn of heaven.
A sweet rapt hymn, whose melody so fine,

, stole on the twilight air,
y ears, enrapturing as it passed
into the silence of the night
ike that it seemed to be a dream.
ı from the thick wood close by there came
) unearthly, throbbing, quivering—
: than harpstrings make, more rich and deep,
g fast from a nightingale's weird throat.
ned as though the melody, like a rill,
ed and flowed past bewildering me,
the deathlike silence of the night,
hostlike that it seemed to be a dream.
n through the dreamy twilight did I look
d saw the bloodred clouds piled in the west
l set on fire by the great setting sun:
lso the stars aglimmering through the haze,
.nd then a fragment of that sweet rapt hymn—
That hymn of heaven—rang in my ears once more.
Big tears gushed from my eyes—true tears
With meanings that words have not, cannot frame;
My wakened spirit seemed to flap its wings
— to heaven its truest home—
...gs in its cage, ...ds of earth;

So broken, like all earthly human things
Seemed but as preludes to a mighty song—
Poor broken touches on the keys of life
Ere the great music comes. And we will hear
Only these sad beginnings from them as
No truer deeper music. So I say
That that which seems to man a broken life
Might be the whole if we knew it all—
Though meaningless it seem and accidental
It doth obey a wider higher Law
Which knowing not we do not understand.
If we could know it we should see at once
How true it is with this higher Law
Therefore condemn not what thou dost not know.
Though senseless it seem beyond thy sight
Through the wide realms of space far away.
When thou hast left the vale of ignorance—
Climbed wisdom's mountains—stood upon the top
Of some high pinnacle thou'lt see clear
The comet then, and mark its journeyings.
How true they be unto that higher Law—
Far truer than the clock striking here.

But I have lost myself among the stars—
How can you children understand such things!

As I do look on you I feel so sad
So full of strange thoughts and forebodings
Of the dark future which is veiled in night—
Your sunny eyes shall all grow dim and dark—

Your rosy cheeks grow pale, your glossy hair
Grow white as winter, and your faces, now
So smooth, all rough with wrinkles, scars
Of time; and all the hopes and loves
Which cluster in your hearts like summer flowers
Be crushed by sorrows, and old Time
Drag you beneath its wheels, far worse,
Far worse than Indian Juggernaut—it may be so!

But there is ONE who is both wise and strong,
Your FATHER, for He made you—pray to HIM,
And from aloft HE will put down HIS hand
And take thy little hands and lead thee on
All through the Night of Time—its wilderness,
Quagmires, and forests—lead thee on
Unto the Better Country far away.

4

Each meek blue eye—two meekest bluest dots!—
I liken them to two forgetmenots,
Plucked by a brook:
I con and study her, and her coy ways,—
Heart rapt and pleased, I've read for many days
This living book.

5

Little joys and sorrows fill her heart,
Little thoughts find utterance in part:
Like melodies,
Little yearnings break through her red lips;
Little dreams flit past, and each one dips,
Like summer bees,

6

Into the bosoms of the summer flowers,
Finding sweet honey through the sunny hours
Of childhood's dreams—
That flowery fairyland with bluest skies,
Music and sunlight, joy that never dies,
And lilied streams.

7

Thin is her face, and white as winter hills,
So white and delicate and thin—it thrills!
Yet beautiful—
Frail as a tulip's cup that droops at night—
Too fine the clayey garment, thin and white,
To hide her soul.

8

With her snowwhite nightgown wrapt about—
All white, save what beneath peep out—
Ten toes so red :
Above, the crimson lips and two blue eyes,
Crowned by the yellow hair, that flowing lies
About her head.

9

The mother says that she is not for earth—
One of those goodly buds of diamond worth,
All wet with dew,
Plucked by God's fingers from earth's garden dim,
Blossoming most beautifully nearer Him,
Forever new.

10

When it shines she always goes to meet
Daddy, coming homeward up the street,
With weary pace ;
Spying him while he is yet afar,
See her running !—hands held in the air,
And gleeful face !

11

How I love to hear her say her prayers—
With enigmatic words and simplest airs—
Above all things :
Sometimes on Sunday when it groweth dim
At eve, the father starts a simple hymn,
And then she sings.

12

On a Sunday she is dressed so trim !—
Every garment clean, ordered so prim,
I cannot say—
Then I seem to love her more and more,
She looks so frail and beautiful and pure
All through that day.

13

Frock blackbraided, blue unto her knees,
Then four inches of each leg one sees,
Then each red sock;
Black shiny boots make music on the floor;
Above, a pretty whitelaced pinafore
Half hides her frock.

14

Ribbon headband, blue as summer skies,
Keeps the yellow locks from her blue eyes—
Red tieups, two,
Starred with blue buttons—yellow fringe
Twining round each—a star's own tinge,
Round stars skyblue.

15

Half for use did this good mother make
Tieups so pretty—half for beauty's sake—
For I will guess
That as she stitched away, her heart was full
Of—Ah, 'twill make my Lizzy beautiful,
O yes ! O yes !

THE AFTERTHOUGHTS.

16

MAN'S philosophies so wise and grand,
His colossal temples—how they stand,
And seem so great—
What are they but childlike mutterings,
Children's clayey castles—foolish things,
Which them elate.

17

As a father, brave and wise and great,
Pondering the mysteries of this mortal state
Comes on a child—
And after his great thoughts for many years,
And growing wisdom, now he hears
Words sweet and mild.

18

For the child comes to him with some woe,
And plaintive voice, and tears that trickle so
Adown its cheeks;
Telling the little sorrows unto him,
Which fill its little heart up to the brim,
Until he speaks,

19

Also stoopeth down from his high place,
Pressing its red cheek to his hairy face
With many dears;
While a great pity in his heart doth rise—
Silently down from his great eyes
Trickle two tears.

20

To the music of the little heart,
Beating is the great one—each its part
In a sad song—
Ending in a chorus joyfully,
Whose refrain in that little heart shall be
Ever so long.

21

Now if the child have a wilder heart,
Causing its father many a pang and smart,
And sleepless night;
Being his child, he therefore loves it still;
Over it his heart yearns, and ever will,
Though none requite.

22

Though all forsake his child yet he will not—
The child's heart beats, its blood is hot
With life he gave:
Nature so wild came with its life,
Heart too with sinful passions rife—
And he would save.

23

And GOD is our great FATHER, good and wise,
We His poor children—He doth none despise—
Hears our poor cries:
And if some foolish child do wander far,
He hears it, sees its tears, stoops from afar,
Even from the skies.

EDITH:

MY BLUEEYED, ROSYCHEEKED, BROWNHAIRED PET.

This tale was sent to a little girl named Annie, at whose house I was working, and with whom I made friends: she sent me a little letter full of hieroglyphical marks and quaint drawings; and I promised to send her an answer, which made her blue eyes twinkle. Says her bigger brother to me, Get an old stamp and stick it on an envelope, to make believe the postman brought it: it will please her so. So I did send the promised letter, and was afterwards told that she was wellpleased.

MY LETTER TO THE LASS.

IN answer to the note you sent to me
(So full of funny figures and strange words,
That I have tried to read it all in vain),
I send you one, telling a little tale,
About a pretty girl whom I love much;
For your blue eyes, and rosy cheeks, and face,
All ribbed with sunny smiles—your wayward hair
Dangling before your eyes—your merry laughs
Ringing all through the house, were just like hers—
They made me think of her and love you too.

There is just one thing more ere I begin:—
When you have read this little tale all through,

Show it your mother and father, and also
To tiny meekeyed Ethel, and the rest;
Then softly, slily, telling nobody else,
You steal upstairs with footsteps quite unheard—
Go to your little drawer where lies the doll
You showed me, with fair face and yellow hair,
And pretty straw hat nicely trimmed with red
And yellow ribbon, and that bluestriped frock;
And hide it there, heaped over with doll's clothes—
Right underneath that manycoloured heap.
So when you grow a woman, and some day
Think of the rough man who came to your home,
With hammer and saw and chisel and axe,
Filling the house with clangor, dust, and din;
Then you can read this tale, and know that he
Wished, above all things, that you might be good,
And love and bless all men like JESUS CHRIST.

THE LITTLE TALE.

I HAVE a little pet, whose name is Edith,
To whom I gave a book of tales today—
A small greenlidded book full of nice tales,
To be a token to her of my love.
One of three she is, the flower of the flock:
A lovely girl exactly seven years old,
And blest with the best attributes of seven—
Its innocency, wildness, and simplicity.
Blueeyed is she, with lightbrown hair, and cheeks

Deep crimsoned with the rushing blood of youth—
Her face is like the smiling face of May.

Yet this is but the outward part of her—the shadows
Of that hidden, truer, lovelier Edith,
From whose young heart is ever welling up
A stream of earnest thoughts, simple and sweet,
And fresh as the clear water of a rill,
When at its source it maketh the white foam.

I have a kind of love for Edith, she for me—
I wonder!—she so playful, I so grave,
Yet it is so—when I go to her home
And take my place with all round the warm hearth,
Forthwith she climbs my knees, then ivylike
She girds my neck with her thin arms, and says
So earnestly,—O let us have a love!

Now men love little girls, as maids do boys—
So putting my strong arms around her, then
Pressing her close to me, with both our hearts
Full of the same fine music, we are one.

And then she opens to me all her heart—
Tells me its little sorrows, joys and cares,
Or says to me the rhymes she knows by heart—
Half says, half sings them, as young children do.
Sometimes the tears will trickle down her cheeks,
And drop upon my coat—I stroke her hair,
And grasp her tighter, saying Never mind!

And soon the little April cloud is gone,
And merry sunlight dances on her face.

Sometimes her elder sister calls her false;
Then me she questions with an earnest gaze,
And I, who see her young heart through and through—
Knowing her truest thoughts are in her words—
Press her still closer to me, answering with a kiss,
For want of words to tell how true she is.

I WENT unto her home the other night,
As the wind blew and whistled, and the rain fell:
Her elder sister Annie let me in,
Whose hand I shook, and kissed her cheek—
Entered and kissed her younger brother twice.—
He is a buxom boy, with cheeks so fat,
And redder than the reddest summerapple—
The very picture itself of life and health:
And always covered is his face with smiles—
He fills the room with music by loud laughs.
Edith I missed, and asked them where she was;
They answered me (I thought with half a smile),
Saying she had gone somewhere for a time.

As I sat down to ask them when and where,
Right underneath the table I espied
The braided skirts of a young lass's frock;
And stooping down, I saw her crouching there
Slily and breathless—still as any mouse—
Her blue eyes quite brimfull of merriment.

Soon she was seated snugly in my lap,
And the same subtile music filled our hearts.
Then she talked in this manner cosily:—
You look just like a poet, that you do—
I should so love to live and sleep with you,
And be with you all through the livelong day—
I wonder what you'd do if I should die!
And if I were to love somebody else,
You'd cry, I'm sure!—now wouldn't you?—say Yes!
And then she told me of some funny dreams
Which it would fail me to narrate. At last
She went quite fast asleep, leaning her head
Against my shoulder—looking angellike.

Full thoughtfully and long I gazed on her—
The firelight flickering on her peaceful face;
I cannot tell her looks in words of men,—
Her blue eyes curtained by their white fringed lids;
Her lank brown hair in tresses dangling down
Upon her pretty lilac pinafore,
And stray hairs lying all about her face,
Her nostrils keeping time with breathings soft,
Her arms about my shoulders listlessly,
And her feet dangling down below my knees:
And all so soft and peaceful, yet so wild,
Like to a still and yellow eve in Autumn.
Full thoughtfully and long I gazed on her,
And thought how Time with his hard tools
Would chisel wrinkles in that even face;
And Sin might blotch it with its brands and scars:

And thus my thoughts did go meandering on,
Until she drew her fallen eyelids up,
And her blue eyes looked up so dreamily.

Her mother, who did sit beyond the hearth,
Seeing her Edith's drooping weary lids,
Said she must go to bed and rest till morn.
Therefore I pulled off for her her small shoes;
And then she knelt down at her mother's knees,
And with her brother said her simple prayer;
Then came and clasped my neck, and kissed me twice,
Whispered a funny secret in my ears—
Whispered this secret and then said Goodnight!

Therefore this lass is very dear to me—
So dear! and through the livelong day
Some beautiful stray thoughts, some memories
Like streaks of light come, making my heart glad:
And often I go there just for her sake—
To nurse her in my lap, and hear her talk.

And as she nestles there, I often say,
God bless her!—may her joyfulness
Be yoked with rosy health through all her life—
Through happy childhood, with its merry laughs,
Through charming maidenhood, with its dreams of love;
Through earnest womanhood, with its many cares,
Through wrinkled age, unto the peaceful grave:
And may simplicity and innocence

Be ever here that always she may be
In heart, the girl so sane and beautiful
Of whom I tell in these this little tale

WE TWO BROTHERS.

GOD bless their merry hearts as full of fun!
I love to see their sunny smiles, and hear
The music of gladness flowing from their lips—
For somehow the light glimmers on my face,
The music also ripples through my heart.

Boys will be boys; them let them laugh and play,
And have their fill of merrymaking now.
I liken them with my fancy to two rills
Which cannot rest, but ever babble and foam:
Yet like them they shall change as years roll on,
Into the deep and silent river's flow.

Busy in the frontroom I am sitting,
A skein of thoughts and fancies all untangling,
To weave into the little homemade book
Which thou art holding in thy hand and reading:
I can hear them plainly in the backroom—
Their patterings, laughter, singing, drown all else.
Conning and studying about this book,
When a fine thought makes music in my heart,
And I am trying, with many mutterings,

To set it to the music of sweet words;
Sometimes they stand outside the door and mock,
And say I am foolish, and have forgotten
How many thumbs and fingers I have got.

Just now they came in for to make me smile;
I heard their stifled laughs and footsteps as they stole
Along the passage to the frontroom door—
One's head lost in a lilac sunbonnet,
The other crowned by my black broadbrimmed hat.
Their faces were quite full of wrinkled laughs,
Their eyes were bright and glimmering like four stars—
Four twilight stars when scarce the sun has set—
Only the stars are yellow, their eyes blue.

They come to kiss me when they go to bed—
Kisses sweet and precious, full of music,
Heartmusic—heard not with the outward ears.
And when I go to bed I see them there—
Each head upon the pillow fast asleep—
I hold the light o'er them and gaze awhile—
Two happy faces, full of hope and peace!

PART TWO:

THE POET'S OWN.

METHINKS I am a poet:
My soul is always longing
For a grander world than this—
Strongest yearnings yearn within me,
Great desires live and burn,
Wildest fancies play therein,—
My heart is full of music,
And my head is full of dreams.
And if I read a poet's lay,
It haunts me everywhere,
And it will not go away:
And I love all poets,
Each seems to me a brother—
I could tell him all my heart.

O MY songs! whose winsome measures
  Filled my heart with secret rapture!
Children of my golden leisures!
Must even your delights and pleasures
  Fade and perish with the capture?

Sweet Pandora! dear Pandora!
  Why did mighty Jove create thee
Coy as Thetis, fair as Flora,
Beautiful as young Aurora,
  If to win thee is to hate thee?

No, not hate thee! for this feeling
  Of unrest and long resistance
Is but passionate appealing,
A prophetic whisper stealing
  O'er the chords of our existence.

Him whom thou dost once enamour,
  Thou, beloved, never leavest;
In life's discord, strife, and clamour,
Still he feels thy spell of glamour;
  Him of hope thou ne'er bereavest.

Weary hearts by thee are lifted,
  Struggling souls by thee are strengthened,
Clouds of fear asunder rifted,
Truth from falsehood cleansed and sifted,
  Lives, like days in summer, lengthened.

Therefore art thou ever dearer,
  O my Sibyl! my deceiver!
For thou makest each mystery clearer,
And the unattained seems nearer,
  When thou fillest my heart with fever!

Longfellow.

THE POET'S WANDER.

A RUGGED man he was in outward looks,
And him they did not, could not understand :—
His nature not a noisy shallow stream,
But like a river—still and deep and dark.
And so he cared not for their sympathy,
Who knew nought of the pleasures he enjoyed ;
But left them to the range of their small sphere,
And made the great creation all his own,
And far beyond the pale of sunlight roamed :
And thoughts and scenes unmoving other men
Seemed, as the fingers of a master on a harp,
To wake upon his soul the finest melodies.

With sunken eyes and pensive face, where Thought
Revealed its presence in the lineaments,
He gladly left the cluster of dense life—
The Poet wandered forth in shadows wrapt,
And looking very sad and sorrowful :
His form was bent, his eyes upon the ground—
The busy city wrapt in smoke he saw,
Down in the valley looking beautiful,
From far—all hushed the din thereof.
And so he left the town, he knew not why—
Duty had bid him stay, but impulse strong
Had fettered him, and led him forth a slave,

To give a loftier freedom—solitude,
And converse deep with Nature and with GOD.

His mind was weary and his heart was sad,
Through pondering o'er the hidden works of GOD,
And problems on the destiny of man;
Till darkness followed dimness, and he lost
His subject in the misty eve of Time:—
As when, one evening, shadowy Night
Faroff had circled him with airy gloom,
Which came upon him growing dense, he saw
A fiery balloon rise towards heaven,
And from his window watched it earnestly,
As farther off it sailed and smaller grew,
And bore into the hazy twilight fast;
Till seeming gone, he strained his eager eyes,
And saw it yet—a little speck of light—
He could not keep it in his vision's grasp,
But lost it in the distant evening gloom:—
So into the deep twilight of Time's eventide,
His dark and wandering speculations bore.

But as he walked across the flowery fields,
Beholding Beauty's footprints everywhere,
He dashed away the memory of these things,
And muttered in a fiery undertone:—
I'll leave these fruitless meditations, thoughts
Which as I chase them lead to deeper gloom,
And gain the summit of the hill I love,
And revel in that lofty influence—

The subtil genius of the lonely woods;
And hear the evensong of the wild birds,
The wailing melody of windstirred trees,
The music by the hillside of the rill,
That chants forevermore its rippling song.
There from my old and lonely eminence,
I'll watch the grand departure of the Day
Down through his gateway in the flaming West,
All glorious where he trails his mantle's skirts;
Fast followed by the footsteps of the Night,
Who comes to hide me in her mantle's folds.

* * * * *

HE gained his nook at last, and sat him down
Upon a mossy stone by the wood's edge;
And from the misty past there came to him
The phantom of a onceknown song, whose words
Had vanished, but the thrilling measure rang
Distinctly in his ears—restless he rose
And paced along the footpath of the wood.
The words were gone, but still the measure haunted him—
The measure haunted him, he could not rest,
Till his big pentup thoughts struggled for utterance,
And gushing into life in heartfelt words,
Along the measure for a channel dashed
In wild and broken current—so he sang,
Wasting his burning thoughts in foamy words.

* * * * *

A wild and wayward song it was—it took
Its nature from the man who uttered it—
It caught the spirit of that summer eve,

The music of the rills and birds and winds:
It seemed so full of childlike ignorance
And childlike restlessness—like a frail plant
Down in the darkness of a lonely wood
Which climbs right up into the light of heaven,
It clung fast to the everlasting truths—
Stretching its feeble arms towards the light.
His song died into reverie, and hard
He pondered Nature's hieroglyphics vague—
Flashes of light from heaven revealed to him
Halfwords and signs on Nature's hidden page,
Yet tinted with the glory which they hid,
And fraught with wondrous lessons, deep and true,
And hinting to a grander life than this.

He watched the sunset overwhelmed with awe,
And thought of many a one with hoary head,
Whose dawn prophetic was of grand career,
And peaceful sinking in the glorious West;
But round whose natures ivylike had twined
Grim sin, killing the godlike noble part:
And so their course was marked by gathering clouds
Their setting by a rayless murky West:
He prayed that at the evening of his life,
Below Time's near horizon he might go
With trailings of unearthly splendor down.

He heard the voices of the evening birds;
And thought, as their vibrations died away,—
The words and deeds of men are voices too,
Vibrating to the solemn end of Time;

We'll hear their echoes in Eternity.

* * * * *

AND thus the poet homeward took his way—
Fluttering the feeble wings of his chained soul
To wanton in sublimer freer air:
Saw in the distance with the eye of Hope
Laurels for him upon the fields of song;
And with the clearer piercing eye of Faith,
Afar through mists, unto the end of Time,
A fadeless crown for constant war with sin,
And everlasting laurels for a life well spent.—
How could he live without sure hope of heaven,
And such soulhunger ever gnawing him?
And many a nameless feeling came and went,
And glorious thoughts and visions came to him,
A tyro in the Poet's magic craft,
He could not quicken with the paint of words;
Yet well he knew the music, sunset, stars,
And the great visions which he thought he saw,
And those almighty stirrings of his soul,
Which made him feel so godlike, were not all
Mere dreams, but earnests of a truer life.
Therefore his soul was speechless with excess of thought,
And chafed almost to wildness in her prisonhouse:
Till far into the night he reached his home,
And laid his weary body down to rest,
And went into the dreamy land of sleep.

THE POET'S SCHOOLING.

O HOW I love to wander—
To wander and ponder
Beside the willowy brooks
Margined by reeds and rushes;
And through the grassy fields
Besprinkled with wild flowers;
And o'er the meadowy hills
Where the winds fresh and free
Make music on the trees;
And through the valleys green
Where rills do always sing:
Through the thick and shady woods
Ringing with a hundred notes
Of wild birds' melody—
Ah! I do love to wander—
To wander and to ponder:
With the fair green earth beneath
And above the azure sky.
Sometimes old mother Nature
Comes to me and whispers,
Tells me I am her child:
Then she takes me by the hand,
Leads me forth about the world,
Shows me all the wondrous things
Writ in Nature's deep old book—

Seeming in another tongue;
Or like hieroglyphics
Of all colours quaint and strange
Writ in children's alphabets—
Meads tinseled with many flowers,
Looking like so many spots
Of red, and white, and yellow,
And blue, and green, and speckled—
Bushes, trees, and leaves, and plants
Of every shade of green:
Water bubbling out at rills,
Flowing down the brooks and streams,
Rushing down the rivers fast,
Surging in the mighty seas,
And its heavenkissing waves
Far away athwart the main,
Where the sky and ocean meet,
Washing the blue walls thereof.
So she shows me everything
In the earth, and sky, and sea,
Tells me also what it means:
So that I begin to see
Through the mystery of things
Through the symbols to the truths—
And I'll sit at Nature's feet
Till she's taught me all her lore.

IN the Springtime's early morn,
Do I love to wander forth

Beside the willowy brooks,
When the air is fresh and pure,
And the grass is new and green;
And the yellow buttercups,
And the daisies fringed with white,
Are all wet with morning dew;
And glittering on the willows
Are many little dewdrops;
And many birds are singing,
And many too are building
Their nests so snug and homelike—
Flitting past me, in their mouths
Bits of lichen moss or hay:
And the lark is high above
Like a dark speck in the blue,
And his gushing melody
Falls around me like a whisper,—
Like a murmur in mine ears,
And it seems to come from heaven.
As I musing wander on,
Everything I see is new,
Also gay and beautiful—
Banks quite lined with primroses,
Violets hid among the grass,
Meadows with sweet cowslips yellowed,
Dells blue as the sky with bluebells;
Every field and copse and wood
Full of music sweet and fresh;
Buds abursting into flowers
Of which one can gather handfulls.

From the hedgerow of a lane
Of the blossoms numberless
Often do I pluck a bunch,
Shake the dew upon the ground—
Look upon the sweet white flowers
And smell their balmy scent—
Peep into some pretty nest,
Gaze upon the painted eggs,
And admire the cunning way
How the builders builded it—
Then go wandering down the lane
Lost in musings deep and rapt
About Nature and its GOD.

IN the Summertime I love
For to wander where I will,
Breathing in the warm soft air
Laden with the flowers' sweet breath.
How beautiful it is to sit—
Sit alone in some lone spot
(Yet not alone! how can I?)
Down beside some lilied brook
On a broken willow tree,
Or upon some buttercup bank
Hid by flowers and tall grass,
Lean against the willow tree
Bask there in the sunlight warm
And let the voices manifold
So sweetly steal into mine ears—
A hundred notes and songs

Of happy busy birds,
The soaring lark on high
Singing to the white clouds;
The everlasting hum
Of honeysucking bees;
Afar the merry bells
And din of the great town;
Also the merry notes
Of children's laughs and cries,
From the village beyond the fields:
All mixt into one long song
So fresh and sweet and strange.
Then to look upon the brook
See the swallows skimming o'er,
Making often lines of foam
With their breasts upon the face,
Flap it also with their wings:
Or the myriad summer flies
Skimming o'er the face of it;
Sometimes one poor hapless one
Who has fallen thereinto
Struggling hard to fly away,
Till some wise fish swallow it.
Watch a thousand minnows sport
Making rings upon the brook
Broadening till they touch the bank
Or break against each other.
And the happy butterflies
Flitting past so merrily
Flapping manycoloured wings.

Then some sweet bird's ruffled throat,
Sitting by me singing so,
Little dreaming I can see;
Myriad insects flying round
All as happy as can be;
And the grasses' tasseled tops
Waving to the gentle wind.

I could lie down prone allday
All among the grass and flowers,
And listen to this music evermore,
And feel the warm light stream on me,
And watch the white clouds float;
Or gaze into the hazy blue
Until my thoughts all lose themselves
And I cannot think at all—
Drowned in a sea of feeling
Rapturous and luxurious.

Then to walk awandering on
Musing on all kinds of things—
Stop and listen to a rill
Hid beneath the grass and briars,
Ever babbling as it goes:
Watch some children pull up reeds
To make whistles out of them,
Others chasing butterflies,
Others rolling down the banks:
Go into the merry hayfield,
See the reapers mow the grass,

And the women toss it up;
And at even when they're gone
Children come with merry hearts—
Hide beneath the heaps of hay,
Chase each other through the field
With their arms quite full of it;
Roll upon it, toss it up—
Do all kinds of funny things,
Till the darkness drives them home.

AUTUMN is the poet's time—
All the cornfields yellow as gold,
Spreading over hills and vales,
Reapers in them working hard;
Dreamy twilights, grandest sunsets;
Green and red and yellow leaves—
Every colour in the woods—
All wrapt up in mystery,
Looking beautifuller for it,
As a pretty maiden's face
With a gauzy veil before it.
Twilight is the weirdest hour—
Dim and hazy is the air,
Gilded with the golden sunset:
Then I love to wander forth,
And to climb up some tall hill
Over which a steeple peers—
See the meadowy hills and dales,
And the green and woody banks

Of the streams flowing between;
See the copses here and there,
Like dark spots among the fields,
Where tall trees and clambering plants
Brambles, branches and leaves
Tangle and twine together,
Where the birds come from the fields
When the dusk of evening spreads,
To sit therein till dark and sing,
Making all the copses ring—
Of wild birds' music full.
And below me in the dell
An oldfashioned village lay,
With a covering of blue smoke
Resting on it like a mist:
Down into the village go—
See the merry children play,
And the lads and lasses lark,
And the young men in the lanes
Woo the maidens whom they love,
And the men talking in groups,
While upon the doorsills sit
Women nursing their sweet babes,
Or with their knitting things
Knitting stockings and so on.

Climb again up the tall hill—
Stand once more and look around
When the twilight growing deep,
Wrappeth things in a garment

Of such a dreamy beauty :—
All the meadows lying low,
And the rills and brooks quite hid
By a veil of whitest mist ;
And the rugged clouds piled up
Far away on western hills ;
See the red sun sink behind
Painting them all colours—
Filling them with such light
That they seem to be on fire :
Watch them grow dimmer, dimmer,
As the sun lower sinks,
The broad fringe of yellow light
Ever growing narrower,
Till it all is gone away—
Only great black embers left.
Wrapt in darkness are the hills :
I, alone with them, am left,
With such great thoughts in my heart
Which I cannot tell to men,
Though I hope some day to do,
When my tongue hath learned to speak
The great thoughts that dwell in me.

So the day so beautiful
Silently hath died away :
Yet the night is very grand—
Multitudes of yellow stars—
Pretty little golden isles
Scattered in a great blue sea.

All the world gone fast asleep—
All the birds in fields and woods
Save the lonely nightingale!
All the busy tribes of men
In great towns and villages!
All the clamor and clangor hushed
Of the busy, restless world!

So I seem left all alone
With the great world and the sky,
With the darkness and the stars;
And sublimest deepest awe
As a garment doth enwrap me;
And divinest greatest thoughts
In my heart do foam and surge,
Like the waters of the sea:
Then alone among the hills
I feel strong and giantlike—
Full of music seems my heart,
Travailing with a wondrous song.

WINTER too is beautiful—
On the hills and woods and dales
Clad with garments white and pure—
Frosts that whiten trees and roofs,
Snowflakes dancing in the air,
Lads and lasses, boys and girls
Skimming o'er the frozen lakes;
Tales around the fireside—

Tales of wanderings, loves and wars;
And without, the winter storm,
Singing to the world a song
Full of wildest majesty.

ALSO with my inner heart
Do I hold communion—
Listen to its melodies;
Mark its hopes—to what they look;
And its yearnings, whitherward
Do they ever clamber so;
Mark its loves and dreams and wants;
Hearken to its secret voice,
Telling me so silently
Of the inner soul of things.

SO I learn the poet's lore—
Nature for my governess,
And the great world for my school,
With its high blue walls and roof;
And the winds and clouds and stars,
And the fields and flowers and brooks,
Are the pages of the book—
Full of deep mysterious words
Which I con and ponder o'er.

A REVERIE.

[SCENE.—A chasm among some small hills in a midland county of England. A rill arunning down the chasm, babbling as it goes; a large mossgrown stone by the edge thereof, whereon a wayward-looking young man sits. The hour is twilight—the sun hath descended, leaving streaks of purple and yellow in his pathway; the eastern slope of heaven is besprinkled with yellow stars; they glimmer in the dome, and will soon be in the west also.]

'TIS twilight, and the stars begin to peep
From out their hidingplace: the air is still:
Night's curtain falls; the sun has gone to sleep
Behind the summit of yon western hill:
No sound disturbs the silence save a rill
Creeping among some pebbles, and a thrush
Which ever when it warbles seems to thrill
Through me, and as the mighty waters rush
So from my pentup soul seem living thoughts to gush.

A feeling vague yet sacred creeps o'er me,
And fancies rush in fleet and manifold;
The darkness falls around, and silently
I sink into a sea of thought—like one of old,
I fall into a trance—a vision bold
Floats just before me, and the rolling sound
Of heavenly music drives away the cold
Dull sounds of earthly melody, around
It rolls to harmony, and is with glory crowned.

How gently do the flakes of darkness fall!
How slowly Night doth wrap me in her cloud!—
As gently as the lovelooks of a maiden fall,
As slow as sin winds round its awful shroud:
And in upon me untold fancies crowd—
Old mother Night my youthful fancy taught
Full many a phantom truth—to me she bowed,
And spake of omens, and she still is fraught
With noises, dread suggestions which I never sought.

But there are deeper lessons learnt from Night,
When darkness stops the outflowings of the soul
And chains it to itself; when quit the sight
The smiles of maidens, and an endless roll
Of gay attractions; when it needs no haul
To draw up treasures from the sea of Thought,
But they come thick and plentiful, as fall
The dewdrops on a summer's eve, unsought,
With freshness, brilliancy, and beauty fraught.

O Darkness! temple of the poet's soul—
Where he can come and worship at the shrine
Of Nature, while the big thoughts roll
As waves do in a tempest—strong, divine
In fury—restless until they entwine
Around some idol: wrapt in Fancy's fire
He visits hell, or o'er the boundless brine
He flies, lingering where tempests dwell: then higher
He soars, and with heaven's music mingles his own lyre.

There are some pleasures in the ballroom gay—
'Tis joyous 'mid earth's luxuries to dream
Of lovely forms that haunt one night and day,
To have the sum of human bliss, or seem
To have that phantom thing—to catch a beam
Of joy's sweet light—to list with rapture wild
To thrilling eloquence—to die away
In laughter, while upon the stage the child
Of genius makes the sea of passion rough or mild.

But all these earthly joys are earthly still,
And leave behind a feeling of disgust
Viewed in the light of heaven—a moment's thrill
And all is gone: 'tis thus the child of lust
Soars not, but ever grovelling in the dust
Of palsied passion—weary without rest—
Pursuing Venus, Bacchus, but (as must
All wanton devotees be) he's unblest—
Souls need a nobler food—demand a wiser quest.

AND now a breeze is blowing, and the mild light
Of the full moon, till now not clearly seen,
Reaches me in its rolling speedy flight,
And fills me with a peace calm and serene:
Shrouded in fancy, wrapt in the bright sheen
Of intellectual fire, I quit the world
Of dullness, palsied joy, and objects mean;
And, with the flags of fancy all unfurled,
Into a region lofty, pure, sublime, I'm hurled.

I wrap me in the sacred cloak of Thought,
And shut out all things mortal which decay,
And soar away into the land I sought—
Quit the grim darkness for an awful day,
Whose burning light melts all the man away:
The soul in freedom revels, leaves its cage,
And, big with ecstasy, begins a lay
Lofty and thrilling—swelling then to rage,
Speaks thoughts youth cannot grasp or utter, or old age.

O noble Thought! I worship at thy shrine,
And lay upon it everything I own,
To gain the key, to make thee mine,
And go into thy temple when alone—
That Universe of Grandeur, where the moan
Of poetasters finds no wings, no soul,
But Orpheus reigns immaculate, the one
Sole monarch, and as waves of music roll
And swell in harmony, they drown the poet's soul.

This is the home of genius—common men
Know nothing of its caustic nectared joys—
The keenest, deepest thinker cannot ken
The glory of this joy with no alloys:
And when you get there, how all human joys
Seem like the playthings of a little child,
And the earth's eloquence but a poor noise,
Discordant, to the thoughts rapturous and wild
Which fill the poet's soul when the poor world's exiled.

What power can stop his ceaseless flight?
To mighty heights he can on pinions soar,
Can visit all the heavenly realms of light,
The snowcapt mountains—revel 'mid the roar
Of the wild ocean—stand on the rocky shore,
And wreathe in anguish, as the creamy surge
Impassions all his soul, right to the core;
While thoughts no tongue can tell an exit urge,
'ill nature tires, and then into oblivion merge.

Within this hut of mortal clay, my soul
Was never meant to make its lasting home!—
Its sighs for freedom, neither does the roll
Of life's swift waves destroy its love to roam—
Like the caged lion, all besmeared with foam,
Rubbing against the bars to fury chafed,
Or like the eagle from its mountain home,
Its wings clipt short, trying itself to waft
o the high skyey rock where at the storms it laughed.

'TIS darker now—the canopy of heaven
Is studded thick with golden glittering gems:
Through the dark air yon murky cloud is driven,
And for awhile the mild bright light it stems
Of a great host of twinkling golden gems,
Which sometimes peep through vistas in the cloud:
The Goddess of the Night—the Queen of Heaven,
Rides on enveloped in her misty shroud,
nd round her darkened throne courtiers unnumbered crowd.

An Image of the majesty of Truth
Which now shines brilliant, now is lost in gloo
But never perishes—can Truth? forsooth!
It is immortal, hath an endless bloom;
And though sometimes shut in Oblivion's tomb,
It bursts the bonds of error in its might,
It opens in the midst of Time's deep gloom;
And when the sun shall dawn upon this night,
Forever then it shall reflect the glorious light.

Yet in all ages of the moral world,
When, wrapt in error, Truth has been unseen,
Some burning star has all its light unfurled,
And shed upon the traveller all its sheen,
As, wandering in the night, he tried to glean
A ray of Truth to guide his wandering feet
Towards the dwellingplace of the UNSEEN—
The home of Truth, of all things great the seat,
Where Mercy, Justice, Truth, and Love combining

O GOD! who'rt mirrored in yon dark concave,
And in those myriad lights, to THEE I cry!
Struggling for Freedom, power from THEE I cr
These feeble flutterings! waft me up on high,
On Faith's strong pinions! Hear a child's poo
To its great FATHER.—Let me be a star
Reflecting on the world a light from THEE,
And showing it, though feebly and from far,
What noble souls and destinies its follies mar!

FLOWERS, BIRDS, AND BUTTERFLIES.

WHEN I walk abroad,
And see the flowers bedecking nooks of earth,
Of beauteous forms and colours infinite;
And see the butterflies flitting about
With pretty dappled wings, merry as a child;
And hear the melodies of the wild birds,
So fresh and pure and sweet! it takes me back
To sunny, dreamy childhood: whispers too—
Prophetic of a truer, blessed world,
Whose flowers and birds and butterflies
Have all their beauty and music evermore,
With no harsh sounds, or stains of sin and woe—
Seem silently to speak unto my soul!

TO A POET.

THANK thee, Poet, for that lay!—
It hath driven cares away
Which did haunt me many a day.

Driven by the wind, the rain
Beat against the windowpane:
And the storm rushed past amain.

And a storm was in my soul:
And black clouds of care did roll
O'er my pathway to its goal.

The sky was of a leaden hue—
Not one vista to look through
And see a tiny bit of blue.

Soon the sadness me forsook,
When down from the shelf I took
Thy redlidded little book.

And thy song came like the sun—
Gilding all the clouds so dun,
And the raindrops everyone.

And the storm went all away—
And instead thereof did play
The sunlight of a summer day.

And I saw the fields of blue
Symboling GOD and heaven: so true—
Only hid sometimes from view.

GENIUS.

GENIUS! what is it? Is it the fiery madness
That foams and rages ever in my soul?
Is it the frantic music of that sea,
Whose foam and surge and spray do ever roar
Down in the caverns and chasms of my soul?
Is it the yearning of my heart of hearts,
My soul of souls—which putteth forth its arms,
And looketh at the great blue heaven above,
The scintillating stars, the billowy seas,
And presseth all into its inner bosom—
Looketh beyond the multitudinous spheres,
Sees other suns, moons, universes, stars,
Illimitable, innumerable—stretching away
To unknown regions lost in dimness,

And saith—All these great things be mine!
Yet is not satisfied—feeleth everlastingly
The gnawings of this great hearthunger—
Wishing for death for very weariness.

O GOD of Gods! unknown, unknowable,
Is this great yearning after THEE?—
The tiny rill doth run to the great sea,
The tendril clambereth to the boundless light:
And doth the soul of Thy poor puny child
Yearn after its great FATHER evermore?

CHILDREN of Genius!—Ha! I see them
Mistily—far away in the dimness of Time—
Stars in the heavens, wandering stars,
Meteorlike, towering aloft in the dome of Night:
Then plunging to the dimmest deeps of blue:
Now shooting all athwart the deepblue heaven,
Eccentric, fiery, luminous, wild—
Lost forever in the Night at last—
Be these her children? these mad bits of fire!
Alas, for all the stormtost sons of men!
The mariners lost upon the lonely seas
May look at them in vain—they be no guides!

O GOD! Thou sendest all the spheres upon their ways;
Sun, moon, stars, do their journeyings for THEE:
Guide me aright, as through this Night of Time
Aloft I wing my way through the Night's dome—
Guide me aright! make me a steady star
To guide the poor lost mariners on the seas!

SADNESS.

IT was a twilight soft and dim and dreamy
In autumn; and the red sun was sinking
Behind the clouds, leaving a trail of glory
All up the western dome: and in the east
The stars began to twinkle hazily.
The birds were singing their sweet evensongs,
And in a field close by some children romped:
But when they stopped the silence of the world
Was full of a mysterious melody—
For silence hath a music of its own,
A deep weird music, to them who can hear.

I sat upon a stile: a little rill
Singing its bubbling everlasting song
Among the veiny pebbles at my feet.
I'd plucked a bunch of blue forgetmenots
From the rillside—washed by its foam—
They looked just like a little girl's blue eyes,
So pretty, little, meek, and innocent!

Now I had nothing then to make me sad—
No broken loves or aims, or faded hopes,
And a wonderful song of a great bard,
Which had made fine music on my heartstrings
Had not died away as yet—still quivered:
And yet I felt so sad—so very sad!
And could not tell and knew not why it was.

One would have thought that on that summer eve—
Music within, without, and everywhere,
The soul would be at peace and rest awhile:
And yet it seemed as though those melodies
Had woke my soul, and made it flutter so,
As the caged lark, which heareth afar off
The warbling of another in the sky,
Flutters against the bars, and will not rest,
But yearneth for the brooks and fields and sky,
To soar aloft and pour his song on earth.

We may be merry with our hearts beguiled
By some poor joy or bauble of this world:
But in our deepest moments, when the soul
Looks through the shadows of this mortal life,
As from the window of a claybuilt cot,
And sees afar the hills and clouds and sky
And mountains of the sunset drenched in blood:
Then how can it be otherwise than sad,
And yearn for its true home and grander life?

TWILIGHT.

JUST now the yellow sun beyond the hills
Was wrecked and lost in a great bloodred sea,
All fiery—wrapt in purple veils of mist.
Now unto me the world seems like a temple—
I walk along the flowerdecked aisles thereof:
Around me rise its massy pillars, the mountains,
Their architraves of manycoloured clouds

Are wrapt in glory—then the great blue dome.
And yonder through that o'erarched mountain g
Behind the arch of mountains, is the chancel—
Its windows stained with yellow and red and bl
All bathed in the flaming light of sunset.

'Tis vesper hour, and dimness wraps me roun
And all things: and beneath the dome,
The angel of GOD flies swiftly, silently,
With lighted taper from the burning light
Of His altar WHO is the FOUNT of light—
Lighting the myriad lamps of heaven.
Now they are glimmering, unnumbered lights,
All golden—and while I worship, bowing down,
Chantings and melodies flow through my soul;
And from the chancel in deep thunder tones,
Like a great organ—solemn, majestic,
The sea's great music swells and ebbs
And (like little choristers all drest in white)
The birds and rills keep time in softest tones.
So in the great cathedral of GOD I worship—
I join in with the chantings, and I pray:
And the Night comes laden with solemn thought
Wrapping me in the mysteries of earth and sky,
Of Time and Eternity, Life and Death.

CLOUDS AT NIGHT.

OVER the blue plain of heaven,
Flaky snowlike clouds are driven;

And the moon rides through the sky,
All the white clouds passing by.

Mountains in the north they stand,
Filling all yon skyey land—

Massy clouds of whitest hue,
Piled up right against the blue;

All their serried jutty peaks,
Like the crags the eagle seeks—

Towering up aloft, afar,
Pinnacled with many a star;

With a fringe of yellow light
All along the ridgy height.

Solemn is the silence deep,
While the stars their vigils keep.

Beautiful are the stars of night,
And the moon's soft mellow light:

Solemn too are my thoughts, and high,
Walking beneath this azure sky.

THE TRUE POET.

FIRST of all things, he was a man,
And though he had no tinseled robes or crown,
A king of men, with a true kingly soul:
He had the spirit of the gods in him,
And that great fire burning within his breast
Which sets men's hearts aflame forevermore.

And in his heart of hearts he loved all things —
Every baby in its mother's lap,
Every maid with soft and dreamy eyes,
And rosy cheeks and long and wayward hair,
Every bird that whistleth in the fields,
Every blossom blooming on the hedge,
Every flower bedecking the green grass,
Every rill that runneth among the hills;
Also the starry sky and billowy sea:
He heard the wild sea sing upon the sands,
The rills arippling down their pebbly beds.
The mingled melodies of many birds,
Winds moaning loud upon the woody hills,
The little wails of children's little woes,
The merry laughs of children's merry hearts:
And all seemed like a band of Hebrews old
Playing upon all kinds of instruments—

Many harpstrings quivering, cymbals clashing,
Dulcimers giving forth beautiful tones,
Piping flutes; also loud cornets blowing.
Some strains were sad, some full of merriment—
Yet like unto some great musician's work
They mixed and flowed into an anthem grand:
Now playing like the waters of a brook,
With dangling willowtwigs and waterlilies,
Now like the plashing of a waterfall,
Now like the rippling of a rivulet;
Then swelling like the surging of the sea
When its mad breakers crash and foam and roar;
Then ebbing down through softest cadences
To sweetest murmurings of peace and love,
Like twilight lovers' gentlest whispers;
Then changing into wailing sad and low,
Like the drear autumn winds through autumn trees.
He listened to these strains with heart beguiled—
The world was full of music unto him.

I SAID the poet loved all these things;
Yet, if so be that it were possible,
He loved men and women much more still,
And children with their bright eyes and red cheeks—
Even as a mother loveth her own child.
If they were wrapt in rags and scarred by sin,
He loved them all the more, for this he knew—
That one great FATHER made and owns them all,
And they had hearts that felt and souls that soared,
If the chains were unlinked that bound them down.

AND he was greater than the mass of men,
And Nature, eaglelike, bore him aloft,
And showed him all things both in earth and heaven,
And told him all the hidden truth of things.
He dwelt deep in the heart and strife of life—
He saw the myriad of earth's smokewrapt towns,
And argosies and warships on the seas,
The engines dashing over hills and dales,
Rills rippling, flowing rivers, flowery dells,
Great forests, towering mountains, sweeping seas.

And yonder peoples fighting to the death,
And cannons booming there, and flashing swords,
And the air quivering with clangor and strife;
Fiery steeds plunging so madly on,
Drenched in red blood, men dying with sad groans:
And all wrapt in a dark and murky cloud—
The great noise echoing up in the blue dome.

And yonder busily plying away
The workmen of the world go through their tasks—
Reapers reaping corn, sailors on the seas;
And yonder rises up the smoke, and gleam
The fires of factories filling many towns.

Aloft in solitude he saw it all—
His ears were filled with many mingled sounds—
The busy humming of the factories,
The applewomen crying in the streets,
The laughter of the merry schoolchildren,
Psalmsinging in the temples made with hands,

The prayers of many sad and weary men.
And utterances of sorrow did he hear—
Widows awailing, orphans sobbing loud;
Songs of the drunkards also came to him,
And loud carousings in the haunts of sin.
Moreover music dwelt forever in his heart,
For as he watched the world, and saw and heard
Man's songs and joys and merrymaking,
Also his lamentations, tears and sobs,
And all his many deeds and words and ways—
The broken loves, the broken purposes,
The many broken hearts and broken lives:
These things made melodies mysterious
Of thought and feeling—subtil melodies
Living at last in words melodious.
He could not keep them in his heart—therefore
He sang the great song of man's little life,
Under these blue heavens and yellow stars,
To his poor brother man, whom his soul loved,
And whilst it could did live and toil for.
He sang aloud and pulled his harpstrings hard,
So that the music of his song might go
Unto all peoples and unto all climes,
And roll down through all ages to the end.

A DREAM: FRAGMENTARY.

I DREAMT I had a dream!—a wondrous dream!
It was an autumn twilight, and I went
Along a lane plucking the wayside flowers—
The balmy meadowsweet, and the harebell
Lightblue and frail: and gathering from the hedge
The fragrant woodbine blossoms dangling there;
Also forgetmenots from the rillside
Dank—where the water babbled to the stones,
Like schoolchildren just coming out of school.
Beside the rill the evening birds did sing
Sweet evening hymns before they went to sleep,
As do a godly mother's little ones.
Above the rest the deeptoned nightingale
With fine heartstirring warbles filled the air,
Which then was yellowish, mellow and dim,
Like the loveliest autumn twilights are.

But for these things just then I did not care—
My heart was cogitating on great things—
GOD—man! his destiny—Eternity!
Thus did I go towards a hill's green brow:
Methought the sun went down before me—soon
Plodding my weary way I stood atop.
O for a godlike utterance!—behold!
Afar, beyond the hill a city stood

Towering—like a great Bard's dream of heaven,
Built of colossal temples—palaces
With high, heavenkissing steeples—minarets
And domes in crowds—the great sun seemed to fall
Thereon, drenching it all with light;
And this gigantic fairy city seemed
All built of broken rainbows; and methought
I saw a sea of blood washing its feet—
Tossing and surging, and the bloodred foam
Did dash against the lofty walls thereof.
Tall cloudlike mountains girdled it about,
Their serried craggy tops and floating clouds
Were streaked with yellow, red, purple—all tints—
And the heaven glared as when a forest burns,
And all was wrapt in dreamy purple mists.
I felt o'ercome, and laid me down to rest:
Unto this day I know not what it was!—
A wondrous heavenly autumn sunset,
Or a city in the heavenly country.

As I lay dreaming on the grassy earth,
Methought a whisper like the night's still voice
Came from afar, like music down from heaven—
Soft as a mother's cooing to her babe—
And it said—My child! thou art resting safe
On old mother Nature's soft green lap;
I have great things to tell thee, be at peace!

There as I dreaming lay and wrapt in awe,
And full of deepest, greatest dreams and thoughts,

And questioning the mysteries of life,
I chanced to look up at the vault of heaven,
And saw scattered above me everywhere
A nameless company of twinkling stars:
And then methought I saw a moving speck
Far, far away, no nearer than the stars,
But getting nearer, larger—till it came
Unto me—a fairy creature with soft wings,
White as the driven snow and dazzling bright—
Methought I could not look upon the vision sweet.

* * * * *

Swiftly through the midnight air we journeyed
Over lands and oceans, mountains, forests—
Heard the wild beasts roar and eagles scream;
And the world's great towns past swift beneath us,
Dim and dingy, wrapt in fog and smoke,
With their broken rows of blinking lights:
All hushed the busy noise and din thereof—
Save drunkards' wayward songs and harlots' laughs,
Also the watchmen's slow and measured steps.
Thus, as we journeyed through the solemn night,
The angel spake unto me on this wise—
How great is Nature thy old Mother!
Sitting alone godlike in Time and Space.
Behold her majesty!—beneath her feet
Lie the deep deeps of chaos motionless:
Upon her broad lap there doth lie outspread
An apron woven at the loom of GOD,
With warp and woof of lovely rainbow tints—
Woven into oceans, mountains, pools, and dells;

Woven into brooks and rills, prairies and woods;
And covered with a nap of varied green—
Figured, bedecked, and dotted everywhere
With every colour which the rainbow hath—
This apron woven at the loom of GOD,
With wonderful and cunning workmanship.
And here men dwell—her puny little ones—
Like gossamer spiders in a field that's ploughed,
Amid the little folds and crumples of it—
Thinking the tiny crumple is all the world,
And knowing nought of meadows and hills beyond.
And here man dwells, builds homes of wood or clay,
Makes his aircastles, sings his little songs,
Climbs to the summit of some tiny hill—
Thereby is tired, resteth his weary feet,
Singeth a song, or maketh a poor sketch
Of some sweet flowerdecked knoll or briary wood;
And, like the gnat upon a tuft of grass,
His heart is big with pride, he seemeth great,
And thinketh he can do and know all things.
And here he goeth to fight with passionate eyes,
Forgetting all the ties of brotherhood,
And killeth other men with bits of steel;
And dasheth on o'er heaps of gory slain,
Plashing his feet in the red reeking blood,
'Mid clamor and clangor, and the clash of arms,
Groans, clanking wargear, and the rush of men,
Deafening volleys booming from afar
Echoing among the little hills of earth—
The yellow sunlight sickened with the smoke.

* * * * *

Seest thou the awfulness of human life?
And man does nought but seek his own poor ends—
O hearest thou not the rills and rivers wail,
The woods' and forests' deep and plaintive moans,
The seas' and oceans' heavenreaching sobs,
For the great sin and littleness of man?

* * * * *

Seest thou her calm majestic azure face,
Her blooming crimson cheeks—sunset and dawn—
Her beaming eyes that look upon the earth,
So calmly, silent, everlastingly?—
Such be her outward looks—her soul is GOD—
Without Him she were a decaying corpse:
To dig a cave in chaos and bury there.
Oh! what strange secrets are hid in her heart,
And what a tale she could unfold to man
Of all that has been done beneath the sun!
If she should break her peace, the world would hush,
The winds stand still in heaven and cease to blow,
The tossing oceansurges be at peace,
The choirs of wildbirds stay their warbling strains,
And men cease from their busy toil to hear.
Silent and calm she looketh, yet sometimes
She cannot stifle her almighty wrath,
But sends her thundermutterings through the world,
Making all things therein to creep and cower—
Her angerflashes flood the night with light.

* * * * *

So we left the earth and journeyed upward,

Swift and silent, through the starlit night:
And the lights of earth died in the distance.
Upward! upward! evermore we journeyed:
And the stars rushed past us making music,
And a myriad new ones came in sight;
And they also passed us making music.
Through the pathless realm illimitable
We journeyed till I, weary, wished to stop:
Then the angel looking backward showed me,
Afar off, a star scarce visible—
Glimmering faintly in the deepblue azure,
I descried it, after earnest gazing—
There is thy home, he said, that seems so great,
A little ball of clay rolling through space.
And then he told me things unutterable,
Until the burden of my wisdom pressed
Upon me, as a ruined falling world
In a dread nightmare; and I could not speak,
But beckoning him to speak not, I awoke.

The day had come and crept into my room,
With it my little life and all it held
Of woe or bliss or want: and ere I went
To do the little work of that short day,
Down in the crumple of the little hills,
I knelt me down and prayed a silent prayer—
I could not speak at all, for all my thoughts
Were lost in wonder and infinity.

A HANDFUL OF BUTTERCUPS.

I HOLD in my hand a bunch of buttercups—
Yellow buttercups—yellow as midnight stars:
Just now, I gathered them in a meadow—
In a green meadow down in the valley,
Along the bank of the willowy brook:
In thick crowds they clustered here and there,
Small patches of yellow along the bank of green—
The bank of the brook that keeps kissing the lilies,
Kissing the beautiful lips of the lilies
As fast as a mother (her heart full of love)
Kisseth the lips of her beautiful baby:
I stooped by the yellow patches along the bank,
And plucked them, one by one, till I had this handful.

I love these buttercups—beautiful buttercups!
They smell of the grass and the brooks and the meadows,
And somehow seem full of the memories of childhood;
As though they were yellow and tiny urns
That held little parchments full of writing.
Just now I was dwelling on one of these memories—
How the girls used to pluck them in flowerdecked fields,
And come to me, making me hold up my chin—
Holding a buttercup right underneath it;
And if the buttercup yellowed the white there,
Why, then they knew I was fond of butter.
Now whilst I was plucking them, one by one,
A crowd of children were plucking them also,
The littlest putting them into their pinafores;
And I smiled to hear their chatter and laughter,
And was glad in my heart that every springtime
The buttercups blossom for children to pluck them.

TO A BUTTERFLY.

O THOU little butterfly!
Flitting on from flower to flower,
Bedecked with gaudy raiment—
Thy tiny flickering wings
Dappled like a peacock's tail,
Painted with the rainbow's colours—
O thou pretty butterfly!
Prettier than the flowers you light on.
Thou art Nature's favoured child,
Like a mother's pet beloved—
The blue sky is arched above,
And beneath thee is outspread
A green carpet all bedecked—
Spotted, speckled here and there
With the colours of the rainbow.
Now thou goest merrily,
Sailing in the summer air—
Now upon a whiterimmed daisy,
Soon atop a blue cornflower,
Then perched on a bloodred poppy.
Now thou risest in the air,
Fliest very waywardly
Over beauties manifold—
Yellow cornfields, grassy meads
Where primroses bloom in crowds
On the banks beside the rills,
Over knolls quite blue with bluebells,

O'er deep rivers flowing still,
Many brooks all murmuring,
Also noisy babbling rills—
Coming to a cowslip dell,
Stopping to dig for honey
Into their deep yellow bosoms.
Ah! thou little butterfly!
Thou art a type of childhood—
Of its glee and waywardness,
Of its love for lovely things,
And its sunny hopes and dreams.
Many, ah! many a merry hour
Have I wasted long ago
In the sunny summer fields,
Chasing thee with cap in hand,
When I was a happy boy—
From the dogrose on the bush
To the woodbine on the hedge,
Up the knolls and down the dells,
Till my little legs were weary.
Eh! those days be gone away,
With their joy and waywardness:
Now is earnest manhood come,
With its manful toil and strife.
Yet my heart loves to look back
On those happy days of youth;
For thereby I am refreshed
For the hardships of my life—
Harder toil and nobler strife,
With sin and wrongs that compass n

PART THREE:

FOR EARNEST TRUEHEARTED SOULS.

BEGONE! ye foolish enfeebling longings and tearful hymns of a Better Land! I have no time to sing. Give me my sword, battleaxe, and armour, and let me go to the Battle of Life—the Holy War; and die 'mid its clash and clangor weltered in the blood of wrong: as one hath said—Rest, rest! have I not all Eternity to rest in? I will *work* till then!

STAND fast, quit you like men, be strong!—*Paul.*

WERE I so tall as reach the pole,
Or grasp the ocean in my span,
I must be measured by my soul—
The mind's the standard of a man!—*Watts.*

HOWE'ER it be, it seems to me,
'Tis only noble to be good.
Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood.—*Tennyson.*

FOR a' that, and a' that,
Our toils obscure and a' that;
The rank is but the guinea stamp,
The man's the gowd for a' that.
* * * *
For a' that, and a' that,
Their tinsel show, and a' that,
The honest man, though e'er sae poor,
Is king o' men for a' that.—*Burns.*

"O STAY!" the maiden said, "and rest
Thy weary head upon this breast!"
A tear stood in his bright blue eye,
And still he answered with a sigh,
"Excelsior."—*Longfellow.*

ITS cathedral, the dome of Immensity—hast thou not seen it? Coped with the star-galaxies, paved with the green mosaic of land and ocean; and for altar, verily, the Star-throne of the Eternal. Its litany and psalmody the noble arts; the heroic doing and suffering and true-heart utterance of all the valiant of the sons of men. Its choir-music, the ancient winds and oceans, and silent, yet most-speaking voices of History and Destiny; supernal ever, as of old, between two great Silences—

Stars silent rest o'er us—
Beneath us graves silent.—*Carlyle.*

TO A WEARY WAYWORN BROTHER.

WHEN thy heart is sad within thee,
And thy aims and hopes be broken;
And no brave word that is spoken
Hath the power to raise and cheer thee;
Then forget not, O my brother!
How in every age and nation
Men have needed consolation:
Perhaps with sorrows deeper, greater.
For no foe can stand before thee
Others have not faced and vanquished:
They have not repined and languished—
Took the way, though dark and dreary.
And there is a GOD beside thee,
Who hath given strength and power
In the sad and trying hour,
To all true men, weak and weary.
Speak with HIM! O wait not long!
For He made thee—ask for peace:
HE shall make thy sorrows cease,
HE shall make thee brave and strong.
HE shall teach thee how great Woe
Is the sore travail which brings
Unto man the greatest things—
Greatness is the child of Sorrow.
Full well know I sorrow, brother,
And the meaning of woe and care—
How the heart feels when they dwell there—
Heart and loves being rent asunder.

Hopes strewed on the Way of Life,
Like a ship's fragments on the sand
After a storm she could not stand—
Shattered and broken in the strife.

Lain my head upon my pillow,
Heard sad nightwinds sigh and the clock tick,
Tossing till my whole heart was sick—
Restless as an ocean billow.

And all the scoffs and scorns of years,
Like a great billow of the sea
Crashing and foaming, came on me,
Bringing a woe too great for tears.

All wrapt in mist the Way of Life,
The past a crooked wayward path,
Men giving to me only wrath,
The future full of storms and strife.

But I would not be overcome—
In the strength of the great God,
Footsore the path of Life I trod,
And new power and help has come.

And the clouds that hid the skies,
Having such a leaden hue,
Now are swept o'er fields of blue—
Gilded with a thousand dyes.

How can he be brave who fights not
Against the false and base and wrong?—
How can he be sinewy, strong,
Who great heavy burdens bears not?

He who scales the heights of rapture
Fathoms too the deeps of anguish —
'Tis not they who rest and languish,
Who the glory of life can capture.

ECHOES.

EVERYTHING that stirs hath echoes—
Not alone the mighty thunder,
Rattling up among the mountains;
Or the steadied solemn footsteps
In the echoing cathedral;
Or the sound of children's laughter
In ancestral timeworn mansions:
There are finer, truer echoes
To men's words and looks and doings.

Look upon a little baby—
Face begemmed with two blue peepers;
With a snowwhite nightgown on it,
And wrapt round its head a whittle—
Nought seen but its face so little.
Little tiny thing so tender,
In its mother's warm lap lying
Snug and cosy, still and peaceful;
Fearless of the mighty tempest
Which goes howling through the darkness;
All its fears and sobs and whinings
Hushed by lullabies the softest—
If it vents its little sorrows,
Kisses fill the room with music.

Bending down looking upon it
When its eyes are gazing upwards,
Do thou smile full pleasant at them—
Such a happy pretty ripple
Will o'erspread its tiny features,
And its little face will glimmer
As a meadow's sunlit pool does.

Shouldst thou pat a little red cheek—
Plump and rosy—with thy fingers,
All at once a heart will love thee,
And a little hand be proffered,
And two small eyes be uplifted,
Gazing up at thine so meekly—
Saying in another language—
O do take my hand and lead me!

If thou lovest a sweet maiden,
And thine heart doth yearn towards her,
And thou dream of her at midnight,
And she haunts thee through the daytime;
And upon some summer twilight,
When the air is dim and hazy—
Quivering with the softest music,
Thou shouldst chance to sit beside her—
Eh! she would be like an angel
Unto thee: thy love would wrap her
In the beautifullest garments.
Ha! I fancy I can see her
Sitting there in the soft twilight—
Tresses dangling graceful wayward,

Looking downward, O so meekly !—
She doth seem a beauteous angel.
Now if thou shouldst take her white hand,
Press it softly, look upon her,
Say in deep hearttones—I love thee !
Forthwith would her soul make answer
From its inner secret places,
Saying—And I love thee also !

Seest thou in yonder cottage—
A wayfaring man doth sit there,
With his wife, beyond the fireplace,
And the little ones around it.
On the table just before him
A big Book is lying open:
Therefrom with his glasses reads he;
While his housewife's nimble fingers
Lay them down to rest awhile;
And the children sit and listen.
Then like great triumphal music
Coming from the distant ages,
Do they hear the wondrous records
Of the prophets' words and doings;
Or like anthems softly stealing,
Falling down from the blue heaven,
Do they hear the tale of JESUS—
How in Palestine HE journeyed,
Spake and toiled and died for sinners,
And then vanished into Glory.
And this music dwelleth with them—

For their lives are good and noble;
And their thoughts and words and doings
Are the finer, truer echoes
Of the wondrous heavenborn music,
In the big Book which the man read.

Looks of scorn and words of anger
Do not die, but live for ever:
In the hidden deeps and windings
Of men's hearts are heard their echoes.
Every man doth make some music—
Sad or happy, grand or worthless.
Hear'st thou not the mighty voices—
Prophets, poets, and all great men,
Calling from the bygone ages—
Filling men's hearts full of music
Of which noble lives are echoes?
And their music too is echoed
From the great GOD who made all things—
Made the music of the meadows,
Rills and rivers, lakes and oceans,
Woods and forests, earth and heaven—
HIM who fills the world with music.

Let us then, O brother, sister!
Strike the chords while we have power—
So that when the nimble fingers
Have forgotten all their cunning,
And the harp and chords be broken,—
The fine music may keep flowing
Through the hearts of men forever.

SORROW AND CONSOLATION.

SORROW.

OH! my heart is sad within me,
Through the turmoil of this life;
And my soul feeleth so weary,
With the din and toil and strife.

For the world is hard and scornful,
And it careth not for me,
Though I strive to do what's noble,
And the right, whate'er it be.

And my heart is full of yearning
After what is great and high,
And my hopes and aims are towering
Up as high as the blue sky.

Through long years I've toiled and striven
Many a weary day and night,
Yet by storms and waves I'm driven
From the goal that came in sight.

All alone and anchorless,
I have seemed to float about
On this watery wilderness:
All the lights of heaven gone out.

And the path which lies before me
  Is beset with rocks, which make
Many lives a wreck to be—
  Stronger souls than me to quake.

And a still voice saith to me—
  What's the use of all thy toil?
Winds and waves of the great sea
  Ever will thy efforts foil.

Thus with hopes all heavenkissing,
  And with efforts strong and brave,
I have seemed lower sinking
  In the foaming, surging wave.

CONSOLATION.

'TIS not in the praise men give thee
  Lieth the greatness of thy life:
Not in the huzzas of victory—
  But the ceaseless toil and strife.

Look into the bygone ages—
  Mark the men who towered above,
All the kings, princes, and sages—
  Gaining every true man's love.

In their lifetime they were hated
  For their manful strife with wrong;
And they were with sorrows loaded,
  Yet they bore all, brave and strong.

And they died, few men lamenting,
Weary, wayworn, struggles foiled,
On the strength of Truth reposing—
On the GOD for WHOM they toiled.

Rise up now, and brave all evils
In the strength of the great ONE—
None can harm thee, men or devils,
If thou trust in HIM alone.

A PRAYER.

O GOD, my FATHER! I am but a child:
Mine eyes are blinded with the mists of Time,
My garments draggled in the dirt thereof;
The din and clangor of it deafens me;
And though THOU liftest me above some men,
I see how high the sky is, and the stars;
And then the biggest mountain of this world
Becomes a hillock where young children play.

All men are wrapt in darkness—THOU in light
Unspeakable, O shed thy light on me—
Hearken unto me, for Thou know'st mine heart—
Unchain my soul and teach it how to fly,
And lead me through the mazes of Thy world,
Away beyond the morning star, where stretch
The unknown kingdoms of Thy universe—
Where other twilights deepen, dawns arise,

Stars twinkle, and moons shed their mellow lights,
And show unto me wisdom's mighty deeps—
O show me what is Truth, and why doth man
Go sorrowing and doubting here below;
And teach me Thy deep counsels—what is man—
Unveil his heart—show me his inner life,
And fill my soul with godlike burning thoughts,
And fill my mouth with godlike burning words;
And give me breath to cry out loud enough
To make the ages hear me—stop and list:
That I may tell all these things unto man
As his poor language will best utter them.

And uproot all the sin that grows in me—
The wayward footsteps and highheaded pride,
That I may see Thy Truth with undimmed eyes,
And go the way Thou pointest out to me,
And do all things in life with earnest heart
And simple trust in GOD, and love for man.

THOU seest the work I have set down to do—
Strengthen my soul to battle with life's storms,
And carry this my lifework to the end.
And yet methinks that when it all is done,
It will be but a poor blotched worthless thing—
Like a schoolboy's wild scribble on his slate;
And men may scorn and think it foolishness:
Yet for the scorn of men what should I care?
THOU art my FATHER, so THOU wilt not laugh.

THE BATTLE OF LIFE.

SOMETIMES in my silent hours,
When sweet dreaming me o'erpowers—

Sighing for a life of peace
In which care and toil shall cease,

And for softest dreamful rest,
And to lean on Pleasure's breast,

Till I find my soul beguiled
By these longings sweetly wild.

Then a whisper in my soul
Tells me this is not my goal;

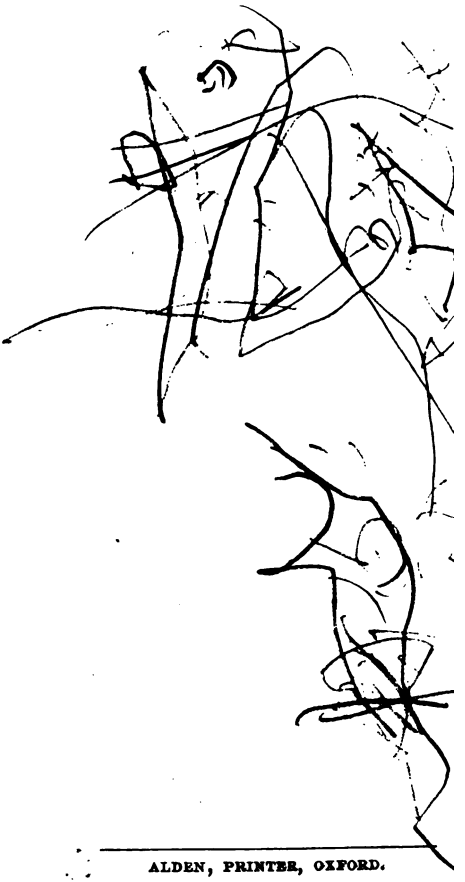
And I seem to hear afar
Noise and clangor of a war,

Of great spiritual strife
On the battlefield of life—

And I cannot drown the din,
But it ever sounds within,

Calling me from Pleasure's bowers
Ever through the silent hours,

To the solemn din and strife—
Struggles for the nobler Life.



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